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OUR ENGLISH HOME:
ITS EARLY HISTORY AND PROGRESS.
WITH
NOTES ON THE INTRODUCTION
OF
DOMESTIC INVENTIONS.

THIRD EDITION.

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PREFACE.

HOME is emphatically the sweetest word in the English language, the object of our choicest care and the most endearing recollections; yet our English home is without its popular history. Until recently, its annals and its records were scattered among the most costly productions of literature, and its progress could only be traced by the most tedious research. But the industrious zeal of collectors of Mediæval and Renaissance art, and the opening of their collections to all, have now rendered the antiquities of home a popular study, and invested them with an interest equal to that long discovered by the learned for the classic remains of the ancient world. The Gothic, if not so refined, has become in such details as interesting as the Classic; and a study of the heirlooms of old English homes—the household treasures of Plantagenet and Tudor days—has, for our past artistic and social history, done as much as a study of ancient fibulæ and ancient pottery has towards a clearer illustration of the domestic grandeur of

Roman life. As an obscurity in Homer may be elucidated by a Grecian vase, so a reading in Chaucer or Shakspeare may receive some emendation from a study of the relics of the homes in which they wrote. Such aids are not less valuable from their humility. In the details of a picture often consists its greatest charm; and a closer study of the antiquities of domestic life will not lessen, but rather heighten, our interest in the grander and more imposing episodes of our national history. The present work is offered as a small contribution to such enquiries. If it should not always satisfy the antiquary, it may at least prove a handpost to point the way to a more exact and extensive field of information.

It is only necessary to add, that many of the following details have already been contributed to Mr. Parker's "Domestic Architecture."

OUR ENGLISH HOME ;

ITS HISTORY, &c.

THE pen of a Cæsar has traced the first lines of our history, and with the generosity of a noble victor, has borne testimony to such national characteristics of the Britons as one could scarcely expect to find among a people whose homes were little better than the huts of savages, and whose minds were imbued with a gross superstitious idolatry. From the vigilant research of the modern antiquary, however, we obtain a more correct view of the domestic life of the early Briton than can possibly be gleaned from the pages of the Roman warrior. The comforts of home are found in those minute particulars which ancient writers thought too trivial to deserve remark ; but that which history has failed to describe, the tomb has revealed to us in reality, and the baubles with which the fair adorned their persons, the utensils of the festive board, and the rude attempts at manufacture and decorative art among them, rise from their ancient barrows ready to assist us in forming a picture of an early British home.

The habitations of the Britons, rude as they were, were yet far superior to the contrivances of most barbarous nations, and in their construction called for the exercise of some mechanical.

Homes of the
Britons.

skill. The prevailing plan was a circle, an ancient statement which modern research has verified by the discovery of actual traces of their site, ascertained by circular hollows, still retaining the effects of fire in the centre. Upon a foundation of stone the walls were constructed of timber, wattle, and reeds, surmounted by a tapering conical roof, with an aperture in the top for the admission of light and the discharge of the smoke^a. Sir Richard Colt Hoare, in his "South Wiltshire," has described the remains of British homes with careful minuteness. The floors he sometimes found paved with thin layers of stone, with small excavations for the fireplace. His researches were carried on with energy and care. Pottery, knives, arrow-heads, beads, fibulæ, and various ornaments of iron were turned up by the spade, and within a widely-extending circular mound of earth erected for security, he developed the plan and found the débris of a British hamlet of the days of Caractacus.

The comforts of such a home as briefly described by Cæsar, and illustrated by these remains, were necessarily limited; yet the Britons understood the art of working metal, of shaping timber, of moulding clay into pottery, of making cloth, and manufacturing articles of dress. They wore trinkets and rings of gold, and the Druids used various articles of the precious metals in the celebration of their gloomy and sanguinary rites. It does not appear that there existed much desire to apply the knowledge of these useful arts to the invention of domestic comfort. The diet of the Briton was as simple as his home, his board was spread

^a *Archæologia*, xxvii. p. 404.

with the fruits of agriculture and the chase. The principal dish was a portion of the wolf, the wild ox, or the boar; hens and geese, although plentiful, were proscribed as articles of food^b. Fish abounded in the rivers, but if we are to credit Dio Nicæus, they were never tasted by the Britons. They drank milk, and knew how to make cheese^c. But if the repast was frugal, it was not enjoyed in silence; the festive scene was enlivened by the harp and the song of the Bard, and as the British chieftain satisfied the calls of hunger, his imagination feasted on the traditionary legends of Druidical gods, or the glorious achievements of ancient warriors. This simplicity of life excited the admiration of a Roman, who remarks how different such manners were to the general craft and wickedness of mankind. They were satisfied, he adds, with frugal sustenance, and coveted not the luxuries of wealth^d. Yet the home of a Briton polluted by the horrors and dangers of a sanguinary paganism, could have been but a poor refuge in the hour of sickness or of death.

The warriors of Rome left many traces of their civilization when they resigned the British shores. Not only in their fortifications, their towns, and their roads, but in innumerable details appertaining to domestic life. The Anglo-Roman home was an interesting scene, but one so similar to that recorded in the pages of ancient classic authors, that it scarcely belongs to our history; and we pass the long era of the Roman dominion to catch a glimpse by the dim lamp of bardic lore of a home in Pagan Saxondom. History refuses to aid us much; but the song of

Homes in
Pagan Saxondom.

^b Cæsar, lib. v. c. 10. 5. ^c Strabo, lib. iv. 305. ^d Diodorus, p. 301.

Beowulf, sung in the hall of Hrothgar the Dane, still lives, and the grave yields domestic relics of that distant age, which, when analyzed by keen research and careful comparison, reveal a ghost-like shadow of the home-life of an early Saxon.

The poem of Beowulf, although celebrating a Danish hero, was composed by a Saxon minstrel of the fifth century, and may be regarded as a description of Saxon manners. Hrothgar commanded his men to build a great "mead-hall," which he called by the name of Heorat. We have many allusions to its architecture, which help the imagination. It was approached by stairs, and when Hrothgar spoke he stood upon the steps, and saw the steep roof variegated with gold^e. It rose aloft, and was "high, and carved with pinnacles;" the doors were hung on hinges, and made strong and fast with bands hardened in the fire. The floor, like the roof, was variegated, the wooden walls were made fast within and without, with bands of iron curiously wrought. The interior was furnished with many a mead-bench, golden tapestries hung upon the walls, and were things of wonder and admiration to all who gazed upon their refulgent beauties.

Such was the wine or mead-hall of a great Saxon warrior, such the "hall of guests" over which he presided with barbaric hospitality. To resign this hall to another, was the greatest honour that a Saxon could bestow. Hrothgar, when he greeted Beowulf his guest, gave him power over his mead-hall, and spake these words; "Never did I commit to any man, save now to thee, this meeting-hall of the Danes." The domestic

^e Beowulf, 8vo. 1833-7, p. 39.

scenes described in this poem, are such as we should expect to find in a pagan home. Heorat was dedicated to the god of wine. The chief and his queen sat on a raised seat, and around the hall were benches for the guests. The slaves brought in the wine and the mead in painted buckets, and the wild unrestrained libations commenced, when Wealtheou, the queen of Hrothgar, went forth arrayed in gold, and saluted the assembled guests. Giving the cup to her husband, she bade him be blithe at the service of the beer; he, nothing loath to do honour to the god of wine, joyfully received the feast-cup, the cup-bearers fill the vessels from the buckets, and the thane, says Beowulf, worthily observed his office, oft filling and refilling the "twisted ale-cup" with sweet bright liquor, which brought forth the loud laughter of heroes! Words grew winsome, the harp, the "word of joy" was touched, the poet sang serene in Heorat, and the mead-hall resounded with noisy revelry.

These festivities lasted until night threw her shadows over the scene; the bed was sought in drunkenness—the king to his chamber, the guests to the bench planks, which were spread with bolsters, whilst the retainers slept on the floor of the hall.

These hints, illustrative of home-life among Pagan Saxons, are verified by the explorations of antiquaries. The custom of burying with the dead the trophies of their earthly career, opens a rich mine of materials to the enquirer. In the tombs of some are found weapons of warfare, denoting prowess in the field, or regal emblems, indicative of greatness among the sons of men: in others, pieces of pottery, and the twisted ale-cup

curiously carved and fluted, so significant of hospitality in the mead-hall; whilst with the devoted upholder of Bacchanalian rites, was carried to the grave the elaborately carved beer-vat or bucket, to empty which had been the glory of his life. These articles display, more or less, the exercise of skill in their manufacture, and it is evident that the early Saxons gained some knowledge of decorative art by their contact with the Romans; for although their pottery was fashioned after old Germanic designs, their bowls, basins, dishes, and platters of iron and bronze employed at the festive board, were sometimes of elegant form, and have even been found with traces still lingering about them of ancient gilding, and other signs of ornamentation. It is evident too that the Anglo-Saxons understood the art of glass-making; and it is probable that their homes were furnished with many fine and delicate articles of this material. We need scarcely observe that among a people with whom the drunken revel was almost a religious rite, with whom to be drunk was to be godlike, the highest effort of their ingenuity was exerted in the fabrication of drinking-vessels, some of which are exceedingly curious, and characteristic of their domestic habits and their prevailing vices. Their glass mead-cups were made with a round narrow bottom, so that it was impossible to stand them upright. When, therefore, the cup-bearer gave the wine in these vessels, the guest was expected to drink it off at a draught, and to turn the glass upside down upon the board; a drinking usage enforced at a much more recent period of our domestic history.

Our English home in Pagan Saxondom, as far as

these materials will enable us to judge, presents no signs of domestic comfort. The rude grandeur shadowed forth in the bardic lay of Beowulf, has nothing home-like in its descriptive scenery. The pagan gods were adored for their attributes of terror, and mere animal prowess was the quality to which every Saxon was taught to aspire. The riots of the mead-hall, and the constant and dearest amusements of home, aroused the worst passions of their nature. No soothing influence presided there, and we see in the fierce and remorseless devastations of the early Saxons, recorded in lines of blood in our ancient history, the inevitable result of their domestic training. We turn from the scene without regret, and look to the next epoch of our history for a more cheering subject for contemplation. Under the Anglo-Saxons our home first emerged from the degrading influence of paganism. Christianity has ever been the guardian of art, and ever creates a change in the homes in which she reigns. But her influence was weak in those dark days of our history, the domestic vices of the English were deeply rooted, they had been nurtured in them from infancy, and their eradication could only be effected by long and patient teaching.

Yet soon after their conversion, the homes of the Anglo-Saxons displayed many improvements. The ecclesiastics set an example of a more elevated architecture in the erection of churches, which, in some measure, was copied in domestic buildings. The hall was the principal, and, oftentimes, the only apartment in a Saxon home;—it was still the scene of riotous mirth. Like the hall of the pagan chief it had benches round the walls; a chair, or high seat, at the

*Homes of the
Anglo-Saxons.*

end being appropriated to the master of the house. The windows were unglazed, and a thin piece of canvas stretched over the lattice formed a slight protection from the wind and rain. Chimneys were not known, and the smoke from the fire, which burned in the centre of the hall, escaped through an opening in the roof. Bede has recorded a conversation which passed between King Edwin and his chieftains, and a remark made by one of the Saxon nobles illustrates this appearance of the hall. "The present life of man, O King," said he, "seems, in comparison to that time which is unknown, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the hall when you sit at your supper in winter with your chiefs, warmed by a good fire in the midst, while storms of rain and snow prevail abroad. The sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and immediately out at another, whilst it is visible is safe from the storm, but after a short space he vanishes out of sight into the dark winter from which he had emerged^f."

The chambers, or bowers, for the female portion of the family, were built away from the hall, but usually connected with it by a passage or pent-house of wood. Unlike the hall, the chambers and outer offices were rarely built of stone. An oft-repeated anecdote in the pages of Asser, helps us to a picture of a Saxon chamber, and shews how rude were even the accommodations of royalty. We are told that King Alfred, finding that the candles delivered for his use would not burn their allotted time, in consequence of the violence of the wind which blew through the doors, the windows, and the crevices of the walls, was led to invent the

^f Eccles. Hist., B. ii. cap. 13.

lantern, by which he was able to protect his candle from the wind. Such inconveniences must have been felt the more from the absence of any means of warming the more private apartments; in the absence of chimneys, it would have been dangerous to have lit a fire on the floor of a wooden chamber. That was a domestic comfort exclusively appertaining to the great hall, even the cooking was conducted in the open air, and old illuminations represent the kitchen-lads attending to their duties around enormous fires, boiling entire oxen and swine in huge caldrons, and surrounded by such indications as shew that it was customary to carry on these operations in the court-yard of the mansion, or outside the castle walls. Slovenly workmanship and chilling draughts were obviated to a great extent in royal and wealthy homes by the use of tapestry, known and brought into use in Saxon times through India, with which country there existed an indirect and imperfect commerce. Wall-hangings, or as the Saxons called them in their homely language 'wall-clothes,' are frequently mentioned among the household treasures bequeathed by the wealthy. Aldhelm speaks of hangings dipped in purple dye; such home-decorations were the luxuries of the rich. The means by which Queen Ethelburga endeavoured to induce Ina, her royal spouse, to forsake the world for a monastic life, are curious, and throw some light upon the domestic splendour of Saxon royalty. Ina and his queen had been revelling with unbounded luxury at one of their country palaces. On their departure, an attendant, instructed by Ethelburga, defiled the palace in every possible manner; the floors and the decorated

*The Palace of
Ina the Saxon.*

walls were besmeared with filth and the excrement of cattle, and upon the royal bed was placed a sow and her litter. Ina had scarcely proceeded a mile on his journey, ere Ethelburga, by fond endearments, induced her lord to return; but when he re-entered the hall, he was struck with astonishment and dismay, at seeing a place which yesterday might have vied with Assyrian luxury, now filthy and disgusting. He stood silently pondering on the change, when his queen thus addressed him: "My noble spouse, where now are the revellings of yesterday? where the tapestries dipped in Sidonian dye? where the flattery of parasites? where the sculptured vessels bearing down the very tables with their weight of gold? where are the delicacies so anxiously sought throughout sea and land to pamper to the appetite? Are they not all gone like smoke and vapour? Woe be to those who attach themselves to such things, for in like manner they also shall pass away!" This example, says William of Malmsbury, gained over the king to those sentiments with which she had in vain attempted to inspire him by years of persuasion^g.

But these allusions refer to palatial splendour; generally the furniture was rude and simple;—
Saxon Fur-
niture. a chair was the ornament of the hall, rough unplanned planks made into benches being the usual seats; the table was a mere board placed upon trestles, and removed after meals; it was seldom that the hall was supplied with any additional articles of convenience. The chamber, or bower, was furnished with a little more regard to comfort; it is frequently repre-

^g Book i. chap. ii.

sented with a table, a few stools, an arm-chair, and a cupboard for the household treasures. The bed, which consisted of a sack of straw, was placed on a bench in a recess, with a coverlet of felt or skin, with sometimes a curtain before it. The elegancies of home were few in this stage of history; yet on festive occasions a cloth was spread upon the table, a luxury one would scarcely have supposed to have been appreciated; but as the Anglo-Saxons took the meat from the dishes with their fingers—hardly deigning to use the knife—it was probably intended for wiping the hands, and not spread from any feeling of refinement. The table garnish was not very extensive, a few wooden platters, some knives and spoons, an abundance of drinking-cups, and dishes for the meat, were the principal articles; utensils of gold and silver were reserved for the service of wine; the meat was brought to table in large joints, and carved by an attendant. The Saxons were neither luxurious nor fastidious at table. Many of the nobility ate the flesh of the horse. They were fond of fish, and had it in variety and abundance. A fisherman who is asked what fish he takes by his art, replies, Eels, haddocks, minnows, skate, and lamprays in the river; and herrings, salmon, sea-swine, sturgeons, flounders, oysters, crabs, mussels, cockles, plaice, and lobsters in the sea. Bread formed the staple article of the diet of the Saxons; they were particularly fond of butter and cheese, and vegetables of various kinds were cultivated among them; we find peas, beans, kale or cabbages, frequently mentioned. They enjoyed many of the choicer fruits, the cultivation of which was neglected at a later period. If the Saxons

were temperate over their meat, they were immoderate over their cups, for drunkenness was still the prevailing vice of their domestic life, and not only their private misfortunes, but their public calamities, often resulted from its indulgence; the admonitions of the Christian Church failed to check it, yet many old Saxon homilies shew that godly men did not refrain from protesting in homely and unmistakeable language against this degrading sin. Wallingford, the historian, speaking of a Saxon dinner-party, says, that after the meal they went as usual to their cups, to which the English were very much addicted. We may conceive how strong is the example of early precept and habit, when we learn that our illustrious Alfred was sometimes betrayed into its indulgence. A great portion of the day was thus wasted over the wine, and in continual pledging from the wassail-bowl. The host sometimes ostentatiously drank to his guests from a golden goblet, but as it would have been a breach of hospitality to have drunk from a vessel of gold whilst the company were served in cups of wood, it was passed round from one to another, until all had partaken of the cup of friendship.

Leaving the men in the hall, it may not be uninteresting to accompany the Saxon ladies into their retirement, and see how they spent their leisure hour, that—

“ Dear tranquil time when the sweet sense of home
Is sweetest ;”

and here we find the first bright home-like scenes of our domestic history. The mind naturally reverts to the chamber of Judith: we see her there surrounded by her family; a book, not of pagan horrors, but of

Christian poetry, lies open on her lap; and she is striving to emulate the growing mind of the youthful Alfred, by promising that book as a reward for studious industry; patiently she listens to his efforts, and with encouraging words stimulates his opening mind. Whilst the pleasures of the festive hall might inflame the passions of an Edwy, this was the home-like influence to nurture a king whose name was to be the glory of his race, and whose deeds were to be household words among all who claimed the Saxon language as their own. We seek another picture. In spite of the wind whistling through the crevices of the rudely-built chamber, we feel there more at home than in the stately hall of the chief: fancy leads us into the bower of Ethelwynne, she is busy with her maidens embroidering a beautiful chasuble; the door opens, and a monk of handsome features enters that little apartment, he is dressed in a long dark tunic, and bears in his hand a curiously-shapen harp: he seems quite at home, and hanging his harp against the wall, he sits and chats pleasantly with the Saxon ladies; he admires their work, and being a skilful limner, he amiably sketches for the fair Ethelwynne some new designs for her needle; he moreover gratifies his friends by displaying a book enriched with exquisitely-coloured paintings, the produce of his studious hours: Time glides away, solaced by these amenities of social life; suddenly the ladies are alarmed, and their inborn superstition is aroused as the wind, entering through the many crevices of the chamber, causes soft and pleasing sounds to vibrate from the Æolian harp which Dunstan had hung against the wall. We almost

see the colour fade from Saxon beauty, as with startled looks they regard it as the work of magic^b!

Simplicity of manners sometimes compensated in those days for the want of refinement. Domestic utility was not deemed incompatible with the dignity of rank. Even a queen might participate in the duties of her household without scandal, and it excited no astonishment, and created no disrespect, that her homely inclinations led her to spend hours with her maids at the spinning-wheel, or with her children in the nursery. Edgitha, the queen of Edward the Confessor, in her leisure hours, displayed her love of domestic life, and of the quiet and genial occupations of home. At such times she no doubt cultivated that subtile wit of which Ingulphus speaks. "I have often seen her," says he, "when as a boy I used to visit my father, who was much in the king's palace, and often she would question me about my studies, and readily passing from grammar to logic, in which she was particularly skilful, she would catch me with the subtile thread of her argument. She always made me a present of a piece of money, which she would direct one of her maids to count out to me, and then kindly sent me into the larder to refresh myself." We can easily imagine, that with poetry, literature, and the needle, the graces of home were attractive in the palace of the Saxon queen.

With the Norman Conquest commences a new era in our domestic history, in which we can trace by the aid of romance, and the dry but not less valuable records of ancient household expen-

Effects of the
Conquest upon
our English
Home.

^b Act. Sanct., tom. iv. 346, MS. Cottonian Cleop. B. xiii., fol. 70.

diture, the growth of that luxurious home, which may be said to have reached its zenith of gothic splendour in the age of the Tudors, which is shadowed forth in history like some imposing and costly show, rich in all the brilliancy of gold and colouring, yet wanting that air of peaceful and reposing comfort, and that refinement of taste which is alike the characteristic and the charm of our modern English home. We are apt to ascribe to the Normans more than their due; we give them credit for inventions, and for the establishment of customs which had long been in use in a ruder form among the Saxons, but which the sagacity of the conquerors induced them to appropriate, and which their superior taste improved and refined. It would be a more just, and not less honourable praise to say, that they retained many Saxon customs which were deemed compatible with the genius and domestic habits of a great people, without appropriating those which would have disgraced them. We find, therefore, a combination of Saxon and Norman usages prevailing in domestic life, during the long period extending from the Conquest to the end of the fifteenth century.

This period was one of slow but gradual progress; step by step, by rude efforts of invention, by slight improvements upon ancient contrivances, and by a partial encouragement of art, something more was gained in the appliances and adornments of home, than was required by the mere promptings of necessity. This progress is more strikingly discernible in the thirteenth century, during which, events occurred that added fresh treasures, and new comforts to our home, and so stimulated the ingenuity

Effects of the
Crusade upon
our English
Home.

of mankind, that we may trace in them the Renaissance of art, which had long languished under indifference and neglect. The Crusade was the event which tended principally to this revival, and to this vast increase in domestic luxury. By the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204, treasures were displayed to the imitative genius of the Venetians, which became multiplied by Italian art, and refined by the mechanical taste of Europe. The Crusaders on the plains of Tripoli, and in the storehouses of Constantinople, enjoyed new luxuries, and became acquainted with many elegancies and refinements of life; a recital of which, on their return, excited the marvel of the people, and the enterprise of commerce. A taste for the spices, the sugars, the silken fabrics, and the elegant luxuries of the East became almost universal, and an adventure, the most rash, and the most imprudent that history remembers, became a lasting blessing in the trophies with which it endowed our English home.

It is not within the scope of this work to enter into *Castle Homes*. architectural details, except where it may be necessary to enable the reader to form an idea of home life. The Norman castle with its towers, its crenelated battlements, its moat, and drawbridge, is a picture which we always associate with those turbulent days. It was the policy of the conquerors to be enabled by the erection of such fastnesses, to hold their acquisitions with a firmer grasp; and it is affirmed in the Saxon Chronicle, that the poor were worn out with the forced erection of these fortified Norman homes. Upwards of eleven hundred castles were in the days of Stephen to

be counted within the boundaries of England. But these, which at first were regarded as the safeguard of the sovereign, were sometimes employed against him; the baron, secure within his stronghold, would venture to violate the law without fear of molestation. To restrain this dangerous power, Henry II. ordered that no one should build a castle without first obtaining the royal licence. This, however, appears to have been freely granted, for the crenellated habitation was long the favourite style among the nobles; but by degrees these warlike characteristics disappeared before more peaceful and more domestic times, and in the fourteenth century the builder aimed at a point which combined security with the appliances which the growing desire for the comforts of home had brought into fashion. In the following century the mansions of the nobility gradually assumed that comfortable arrangement which marked the homes of the Tudors, and supplied what was lost in architectural beauty with more real and enduring attributes.

As regards the main features of home, we find but little change during the whole of the middle ages. The various styles which successively came into fashion, and which altered more or less the appearance of the exterior, interfered but little with the interior arrangements. The hall was still the principal apartment, the "sovereign chamber," the great room, the head or "heft-place" of home; the scene of festivity, the hall of audience, of justice, and of "pleasaunce." The chambers or bowers displayed but little improvement in their arrangement, being comparatively unregarded, as contributing nothing to the state and dignity of the

baron; even in domestic buildings of considerable importance they were, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, often mere temporary additions to the hall. The hall itself was often built over strongly vaulted and capacious cellars, and the height of this apartment gave it an appearance of grandeur, and afforded ample scope for the display of architectural science. The roof was elaborated with quaint wood-work; the long narrow window, at first a mere fissure in the wall to admit a ray of light, but so contracted as to exclude the inclemencies of the weather, gradually expanded, until, divided by a carved mullion into two lights, and adorned with arches and exquisite tracery, it proved how, even in those ages, taste could rise superior to casual inconveniences. The windows of English homes during these four hundred years, in their variety and beauty, are a study in themselves. Yet with all their ingenious masonry, their rich and admirable tracery, they were at first devoid of glass; and if occasionally we find mention of such a luxury, it was an introduction into some apartment devoted more to personal comfort than the sovereign hall.

It is difficult to fix the exact period at which glass began to be used for windows in private dwellings. It was at no time common previous to the sixteenth century, not because the article itself was either scarce or immoderately expensive, but chiefly owing to the want of glaziers, to the indifference of the people to innovations, as all improvements were called, and to the difficulty of conveying with safety so fragile a material over the

Beauty in Gothic Windows.
Use of Glass in Domestic buildings.

rough roads of early England. In royal palaces, and in the mansions of the nobility, glass in casements was fixed into the stone windows as early as the thirteenth century. It was imported by the Flemings as an article of trade, and was procurable at about fourpence-halfpenny a foot, a sum equal to about six shillings of our currency. The glaziers, however, were few, and the uninitiated were afraid to handle the brittle material: the glazing craft was a mystery rather above the common order, and there was to the vulgar mind something semi-magical in the glass-cutting artⁱ. Workers in glass were well paid, and even had to be sought after when their services were required. When the windows of the Royal Chapel at Stamford were ordered to be repaired in the time of Richard II., a writ was issued empowering one Nicholas Hoppewell to seek for glass in the counties of Norfolk, Northampton, Leicester, and Lincoln, and to impress glaziers for the work^k. Even in the fifteenth century, when the old fashioned lattice-work and wooden shutters^l were more frequently superseded by casements of glass, glaziers were still scarce. Lord Howard was obliged to send from Colchester—then a bustling town as it was thought—to London for his glazier, and he paid him at the rate of fourpence a-day for his labour; and on another occasion, when employed on “my lady

ⁱ Glass was cut by the dividing rod, diamonds were not much used for that purpose until late in the sixteenth century.

^k Turner's *Domestic Architecture*, vol. i.

^l The lattice was sometimes ornamented with metal-work, and often gilded or painted. Windows partly glazed, but the lower parts protected with gilded lattice and shutters, are represented in MS. Reg. 14, E. iv. fol. 245.

Bernys chambre window," in addition to good wages, my lady gave him two shillings for his costs to London^m.

The floor of the hall was seldom paved, but when occupied was usually strewed with rushes or straw. In 1207 the barons of the Exchequer were ordered to repay Robert de Leveland the moneys he had expended in straw and sand for King John, when his Majesty had slept at his house at Westminsterⁿ. The straw was allowed to remain so long that, mingled with the refuse of the table, it often became rotten and offensive. Nor was this the only annoyance to which the inmates were subject: it was complained that even the hall of the king was insupportable from the stench arising from an uncovered drain, which passed almost under the noses of the guests as they sat at table^o. It is instanced as a proof of the elegant style in which Thomas à Becket lived, that he ordered the floor of his dining-hall to be covered every morning in winter with clean straw, and in summer with fresh-gathered rushes, that such of the knights who came to dine with him as could not find room on the benches, might sit down comfortably on the floor without spoiling their fine clothes^p. Although of rare occurrence at an earlier date, painted tiles were in use during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and added much to the cleanliness and decorative beauty of the hall. They were called poyntiles, and set diamond fashion, similar to the pattern still

The Floors
littered with
rushes and
straw.

^m Howard's Household Book, p. 188.

ⁿ Rot. Claus. 9 John. See Introduction to Rolls, p. 95.

^o Rot. Liberate, 44 Hen. III., quoted in Turner's Domestic Arch., vol. i.

^p W. Stephan, p. 14.

retained on our oil-cloths. The hall of Henry VII., in Richmond Palace, was "pavyd with goodly tiles," and so indeed were the halls of many who had some appreciation of taste. They had a pleasing and cheerful effect when the colours were judiciously contrasted; and greatly relieved the otherwise gloomy aspect of the great chamber.

The upper end of the hall was raised a step above the general level; this was the dais, on which was placed the high seat for the ^{Arrangement of the Gothic Hall.} accommodation of the master of the house; on each side were long benches of rough "carpenters' worke," before which were placed the boards and trestles. These formed the side-tables, and were always distinguished from the high board on the dais. The middle of the hall was unoccupied, or left open for the convenience of the domestics, and for the display of those pageants and disports which enlivened the repast. By this arrangement the whole of the company could enjoy the huge wood fire which burned in the centre. The hearth, or "halpace," was a raised circular platform of stone, on which the billets were piled against the andirons. Chimneys, although known, were rarely introduced into the halls of the middle ages, until the change in the style and arrangement of domestic architecture, by the building of solars or chambers over the hall, necessitated some more convenient contrivance than the ancient louvre. The fire was then kindled against the side, and a cover or canopy was constructed over it to draw the smoke, which was thus led to escape through a hole in the

^a Antiq. Repert., vol. ii. p. 314.

wall. The smoke was sometimes conveyed above the roof by chimneys. In the time of Henry III. the chimney-tops were so ornamented as to add a pleasing feature to the exterior, and orders to raise some higher, and to construct new ones in the king's palaces, are in existence; yet they were but rarely introduced into the hall even in the time of the Tudors, for Leland with astonishment "much notyd in the haule of Bolton how chimeneys were conveyed by tunnells made on the syds of the walls betwyxt the lights in the hawle, and by this means and by no covers, is the smoke of the harthe in the hawle wonder strangely conveyed." Opposite to the dais was the screen which hid the passage leading into the cellar and the buttery; it was often panelled into compartments, enriched with carvings or emblazoned with shields and armorial bearings, and affixed to it were branched lights or candelabra of laten or "tre," which on great occasions were filled with Paris wax. The minstrels' gallery, sometimes called the oriel, was erected above the screen. The huge rafters which spanned the roof were decorated with trophies of baronial greatness, and on the highest beam usually hung a pendent shield bearing the armorial insignia of the owner. It thus became the custom, when the guests toasted their entertainer, to drink to the "topmost beam." A perch was thrown across the hall for the accommodation of the hawks and falcons. Necham, writing in the twelfth century, speaks of it as a necessary feature in this apartment, and down to the end of the fifteenth century these birds of venerie occupied the same distinguished place. The hounds and other domestic animals

Hawks and
Falcons in the
hall.

were also constant residents in the baronial hall, and the attachment to these favourites was carried to an almost impious excess. Even the dignitaries of the Church not only followed hunting as a pastime, but rarely moved about without their hawks and hounds. A bishop of Ely excommunicated certain persons for stealing a hawk that was sitting upon her perch in the cloisters in Bermondsey^r. Only a gentleman of estate could bear a hawk upon his fist^s; a mere simple man was not allowed to have so refined a taste, it was a misdemeanor for him even to possess one. Our early kings issued mandates which display a ridiculous solicitude for the falcons and hawks in the royal mews; they were to be tended both night and day with watchful care, to be kept warm, and to be fed with plump goats and fat hens^t. Thomas à Becket, when he left the court of Henry II. on an embassy to France, carried hawks and hounds with him in his train. A noble would even profane the sanctuary by attending divine service with a hawk on his fist, and a leash of hounds at his heels. A writer of the fifteenth century complains that—

“The whole chirch is trobled by ther outrage^u.”

A knight, driven to the last straits of an unsuccessful combat, refused to surrender his sword or his hawk as a ransom; the one was the badge of his prowess, the other he regarded as a pledge of his nobility^x. We are not surprised, therefore, that a perch in the hall should have been appropriated to these honourable

^r Strutt's Sports and Pastimes, vol. i. p. 34.

^s 34 Edward IV.

^t Claus. Rot. 14 and 16 John, et 4 Hen. III.

^u Barkley, Shipe of Fools.

^x Smith's Festivals, p. 177.

birds. As for the dogs, they were convenient scavengers, and eat much of the refuse thrown from the platters of the guests. They are often depicted so employed in the dinner scenes found in illuminated manuscripts. King Robert, of Sicily, was condemned in romance to eat on the floor,—

“With houndes that weryn in halle.”

These hints impart no very exalted idea of the cleanliness of the sovereign apartment, nor was the furniture such as to give to it an air of comfort, which in the earlier ages was a strange mixture of clumsy make-shifts with a few costly luxuries. Art found but little encouragement to entice her across the threshold of home; her graces were more admired, and even her less ambitious efforts found a warmer welcome, in the cloister than in domestic life. Whilst monks read their missals radiant with gold and Tyrian blue, by light streaming through casements of gorgeous colouring,—whilst the lectern of the ecclesiastic was carved with exquisite beauty,—whilst the altar was a miracle of Gothic ornament,—whilst, indeed, all that appertained to the holy office was adorned with the richest and choicest efforts of art,—the rich laity of England manifested no desire to enlist the same talent in the embellishment of their homes. The splendour of a regal hall consisted in a piece of Eastern tapestry, hung on tenter-hooks behind the dais, a silken banker for the chair, and a few yards of carpet, which was carefully unfolded before the principal seat on state occasions; faint indications of a love of decorative beauty, which contrasted strangely with the rough boards hewn into

benches and tables by the domestics, and with the damp walls neither smoothed by the plasterer's trowel nor whitewashed by the dauber's brush. Necham, it is true, as early as the twelfth century sneers at a fastidious luxury which was then first coming into fashion, of smoothing the surface of the walls with cement², but little attention was paid to interior decoration previous to the thirteenth century, when it became the custom to panel the lower part of the walls with wainscoting of oak, to colour or paint the higher parts, and in the houses of the nobility to employ artists to depict histories on the roofs and behind the dais. Henry III. caused a map to be painted in his great hall at Winchester, and at Clarendon he ordered a new mantel to be painted with the wheel of fortune's Jesse; he also directed that his pictures should be covered with canvas to protect them from injury. He issued numerous mandates relative to the decoration and painting of his various castles, which prove not only that Henry III. was a patron of art, but that he was a lover of the comforts and elegancies of home³.

But the productions of the loom became by far the more favourite decorations. Tapestry only occasionally appeared among domestic furniture previous to the thirteenth century, but during the ages which followed it was the principal ornament in the great hall. It was one of the many household luxuries which the example of Eleanor of Castile rendered

² Harl. 3,737, fol. 95. b. See Turner's *Domestic Architecture*, vol. i. p. xxvi.

³ Turner's *Domestic Architecture*, vol. i., and Wornum's edit. of Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*, vol. i.

fashionable. The merchant princes of England acquired fortunes by their commerce in the rich stuffs of Arras and Brabant. The cost of these household treasures was enormous. A monarch wishing to propitiate the favour of a royal potentate, sent a few yards of arras as a present. The sale or transfer of a "halling" was completed by a deed, signed and sealed with due formality. They were bequeathed with minute specifications of their measurement, to an ell, even in the wills of kings and princes. They were paraded on state occasions; and chroniclers recording the magnificence of a baron, and wishing to impress their readers with his domestic luxury, rarely forgot to enumerate his arras and baudekin. The eye was delighted with the glories of ancient chivalry and the love-scenes of romance elaborately wrought in figures of gold on azure silk. Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, the mighty deeds of Guy of Warwick, of Alexander, and Charlemagne, and sometimes the more alluring scenes from Ovid, glittering upon the cloth of gold, aroused the imaginations of the guests within the festive hall; while the most striking incidents of Bible history represented on the chamber hanging, appealing to the thought, led many who could not read, and who heeded not the matin-bell, to become curious about the word of truth. These representations were rendered still more valuable and instructive from the mottoes^b, wise sayings, and terse explanatory sen-

Ancient household treasures.

^b Henry III., in ordering a chamber at Westminster to be painted, directs that it be inscribed with this motto,—“He who gives not what he has, receives not what he wishes for.” Rot. Claus., 20 Hen. III. m. 1. It seems to have been a favourite motto, for he had it also inscribed on a table. Walpole, vol. i. p. 9, Wornum’s edit.

tences which accompanied them, and which, from constant repetition, became household words, and gave birth to much of the proverbial wisdom current for ages among our ancestors.

A common, because less costly hanging, was of arras "powdered" with stars, suns, birds, roses, lilies, or *fleur-de-lis*. Edward the Black Prince bequeathed to his son a halling embroidered with swans, ladies' heads, and ostrich feathers^c; and John of Lancaster left to Richard the Second a piece of arras which had been given to him by the Duke of Burgoyne^d. We might fill pages with similar instances expressive of the value and artistic beauty of mediæval tapestry. Edward the Fourth paid 984*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.* for some pieces of arras, with the history of Nebuchadnezzar, the passion, and judgment wrought thereon^e. This sum was equal perhaps to 15,000*l.* of our money. In the fourteenth century the little village of Worsted, near Norwich, first produced that stuff which yet bears its name, and added to the warmth and comfort of the homes of the middle classes by supplying chamber-hangings at a price marvellously cheap, when compared with the costly productions of the continental weavers. Worsted, it is supposed, was first manufactured in the year 1380, but it would be easy to prove its introduction into domestic use at a much earlier period. A writ issued by Edward III. in 1348, directs that a halling of worsted worked with popinjays, and another worked with roses, should be delivered for the use of the Princess Joan^f.

The choicest piece of arras in the Gothic hall was

^c Royal Wills, 73.

^d *Test. Vetusta*, 141.

^e Issue Rolls,

Excheq., 8 Ed. IV. Easter.

^f *Arch.*, xxxi. pp. 78, 79.

that which hung behind the dais, or which was thrown

The Dorsar. over a rod or screen to form a canopy for the state chair. It was called the dorsar, or dorsel, and the arms and initials of the owner were often embroidered upon it. When circumstances would not permit an indulgence in more costly embellishments, this piece of cloth of gold was the only hanging in the hall. The manuscripts of the period abound with beautiful examples of the ancient dorsar. Generally speaking, the state chair on the dais was the only seat on which any ornamentation or taste was displayed; the guests sat on long benches of coarse wood-work. When we read that—

“To bench went the bold,”—

as in the romance of Amis and Amilion^g, we are to
The Bankers
on the Binks. understand that they went to dinner. The first effort to improve the bench was to supply it with a raised back, called a “bink” or bank, which was added not so much out of regard to personal comfort, as to exhibit the beautiful “bankers” of arras or cloth of gold which on state occasions were thrown over them. A poet, in his description of a feast, tells us that—

“The bankers on the binks lay^h.”

When the rare luxury of cushions was added to the

^g Line 1,898.

^h MS. Cottonian, Jul. v. fol. 175. We have interesting examples of “*banks with binks*” in MS. Reg. 14, E. iv., ff. ccxxxv., cclvi. They were only for guests at the high board; it will be seen that there are no cushions, the covers or bankers being merely thrown over the plain board. The back was sometimes called a *disbink*. “A fyrmē with a bynk borde,” also “a cupborde with a dysbink,” occur in the will of John Baron, 1534. Surtees, Wills and Inventories, vol. iii. p. 12.

comfort of the bench, they were often covered with a rich stuff called *baudekin*, a fabric similar *Baudekin*, perhaps to what we call brocade. It is said to have derived its name from Baldacus, in Babylon, whence, says Blount, it was originally brought. It was extensively used in mediæval homes for the decoration of household furniture. We read of beds, of counterpanes¹, of cloths of estate, of cushions, of this favourite and costly material. A square piece of this fabric, lined with silk or scarlet sindon, was used for throwing over the back of a chair—the ancient prototype of our anti-macassar; and from being made of this peculiar material, it became designated by the name of a *baudekin*, even when a different stuff was employed. Thus we meet with a “*baudekyn of sylke*,” a “*baudrick of black vellet^k*,” and in the romance of “*Horn Childe*” we read of a rich chair of order, on which—

“A *baudekin* *theron* was spred,
Thither the maiden had him led¹.”

But whilst thus richly adorned, the furniture itself, as we have before remarked, was exceedingly rude. Previous, indeed, to the fourteenth century, a pair of common wooden trestles and a rough plank was deemed a table sufficient for the great hall.

¹ “A *bedde of blacke sylk of baudekyn*.” *Invent. of Beds of Windsor*, 30 Hen. VIII.; MS. Additional, Brit. Mus. 10,602, fol. 2. “A *counterpoint of grene silke of baudekyn*.” *Ibid.* The Earl of Essex had in his house, in *Austinfriars*, bed-hangings of “*crymsen vellat and yellow and whyte baudekyn*.” MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 23. a.

^k MS. Harl., 4,780, fol. 8, also MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 117; and in the same inventory, “*bawdekyns of blewe, white, grene, and crymsen*,” fol. 408.

¹ Ritson's *Metrical Romances*, iii. 293.

It was desirable that the plank should extend the whole length of the apartment, and it was an additional source of pride if it had been cut from the territories of the owner. Fifty-two oaks from the wood of the prior of Merton were required to make a *round* table for the palace of Windsor in 1356^m. The board and trestles were brought in by the domestics at each meal, and were usually cleared away before the company rose from the benches:—

"When they had ete, and grace sayd,
And the tabyll away was leyd,
Up aroos Ipomydonⁿ."

Tables with a board attached to a frame were introduced about the time of Chaucer, and from remaining in the hall, were regarded as indicative of a ready hospitality. The worthy franklin had—

The "Table
Dormaunt."

"His table dormaunt in his hall alway."

These tables, roughly made by the domestics, were sometimes fastened to the floor of the hall. Even as late as the reign of Henry VIII., the halls of the royal palaces contained little more than tables and forms "dormaunte^o." It was the architectural beauty, the arras, and the storied tapestry, that gave such an appearance of luxury to this apartment. Perhaps, how-

The Dressoir,
or Buffet.

ever, from the general coarseness of the furniture, we may exempt the old Gothic *dressoir*, or buffet, which, when glittering with the baronial plate, proved the most attractive feature in the hall. Even in its primitive form of a mere livery cupboard of three open shelves, it was a brave sight when so

^m Issue Rolls, Excheq., 30 Ed. III. Mich.

ⁿ MS. Harl., 2,252, fol. 58.

^o MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 417.

arrayed; but when adorned, as it often was in the fourteenth century, with the choicest carving and the most ingenious efforts of the metal-worker, it became an ornament in every way. A canopy of carved wood was frequently suspended over the buffet, hung with cloth of tissue, deeply fringed with passamayne of gold and silver weaving. The top shelf was covered with a cupboard-cloth of needlework or snow-white diaper, and the bottom one was spread with a carpet, sometimes of "Turkeye worek." The plate on the top was seldom touched, being principally designed for show; that in use was placed on the lower shelf. The centre division was oftentimes enclosed with doors, carved with open foliated tracery, so that the treasures within might yet be visible to the observer.

Cupboards
with Ambries.

These depositories were called ambries or almeries, a term derived from the almary or close cupboard of the buttery, in which the broken meat designed for alms was secured from the kitchen knaves^p. The buffet, loaded as it was on great occasions with the household treasures, was guarded with jealous care. Froissart speaks of the envy which the buffet of the king of France excited at a feast given to Queen Isabella. To serve at the cupboard was a post of honour.

Serving at the
Cupboard.

In the halls of our kings, nobles of the highest rank were selected to fill this distinguished office; and the duties appertaining to the nobles according to their several estates, the form in which they

^p In an inventory of the furniture of Henry VIII. we find "cuppe-bordes w^t ambries," some with "two smalle ambries." MS. Harl., 1,419, ff. 56, 370. Illustrations of mediæval cupboards with ambries may be seen in MS. Cottonian, Aug., A. v. ff. 59—334.

should do service, the manner in which they should approach the royal buffet, the ceremony with which they were to remove or replace the various articles of plate, the care with which they were to hold the cup, and the reverence with which they should present it to their roval master, are details which are set forth with the most exact and punctilious care in state documents of the time^a.

The splendour of the festive board in the olden time is often alluded to in history. A dinner in the hall of a baron of the thirteenth century was no commonplace affair. There was a poetry in the scene that so pleased the Romanciers that they have left us vivid pictures of these domestic pageants. The power, the magnificence, and the resources of the feudal lord were there displayed. Surrounded by his dependents, he was a monarch in his home: men of noble blood did homage to his vanity by holding his cup or carving his meat at table: it was there that he impressed his guests with the resources of his revenue and the abundance of his personal wealth. All the luxuries that the commercial enterprise of the Basings, the Rokesbys, and the Crosbys of the time could procure from foreign parts, were added at a princely cost to the novelty of the fare; the precious fabrics of the East, and the artistic productions of the continental goldsmiths, increased the brilliancy of the show. Amidst a scene glittering with arras and gold, the baron assumed the graces of hospitality. He who was stern in the discharge of his public duties would yet unbend at the festive board. The great man threw

Feasting in the
Great Hall.

^a MS. Additional, Brit. Mus., 4,712, fol. 3; MS. Harl., 305, fol. 2.

off his cares, and cast aside his dignity, and loved to be amused as he ate his capon and drank his Gascoigne wine. The poor clerk, who wrote his lord's epistles, who reckoned up the laundry score, and sometimes penned a song, might venture to crave a hearing for a literary effort. The gallery over the screen was crowded with minstrels, and as the attendants brought in the dishes, the hall resounded with the blast of trumpets. At intervals during the meal they struck up a merry tune. The trouvères sang their courtly roundelays, and the ballad-singers their homely legends, and were rewarded with a trencher at the "bordes end." The buffoon, by his coarse jests and jokes, often too practical to be pleasant, by turns pleased and annoyed his master's guests; and the domestic fool, generally a poor half-witted menial, was retained to add to the disport of the convivial scene. Apes were taught mischievous tricks, and, under the tutelage of a page or youthful usher, stole choice morsels from the platters of the unwary; dogs stood upon their hind legs and begged for crumbs; cranes excited admiration by bending a leg and bowing their necks when the chaplain gave the benediction. In fact, no effort was spared to excite that mirth which old leeches held to be the best digester:—

"Merry swithe it is in halle,
When the beards waveth alle."

Our forefathers dined at an hour at which we think it fashionable to breakfast; ten o'clock was Meal-tide. the time established by ancient usage for the principal meal. Froissart often alludes to it in a way that proves it to have been the usual hour among the wealthy^r.

^r Vol. i. 126; vol. iv. 141.

In the fifteenth century it approached nearer to noon. In the rules for the regulation of the household of the Princess Cecil, mother of Edward the Fourth, it is laid down, that upon ordinary days dinner was to be held at eleven, but upon fasting-days at twelve^s. In the time of Elizabeth the gentry dined at eleven, and the merchants at twelve^t. We never read of late dinners in the olden time, unless, indeed, as a freak or from eccentricity. The Comte de Foix, says Froissart, had a strange custom of rising at noon and supping at midnight, which was seven hours after the general evening meal-tide. Dinner and supper were the only meals. During the reign of Henry I., Robert, Earl of Mellent, went to the extreme of relinquishing even the supper; and his example was so powerful, that it became the established usage for some time, much to the annoyance of the good livers, who sorely grumbled, and accused the Earl of maintaining a niggardly household, under the pretence of a new code of health^u. Such a fasting regimen was not long observed, it became again the more acceptable custom to partake of dinner and supper. When Richard II. went to arrest the Duke of Gloucester at Pleshy Castle, he arrived about five o'clock, and found that the Duke had supped^x. The household of the Princess Cecil supped at four. Ten for dinner and five for supper were the hours observed at the University of Cambridge in the time of Edward VI. In the days of Queen Elizabeth, five and six was the supper-time among the higher classes, and husbandmen supped at seven or eight. Notions of gentility

^s Ord. and Regulations.

^t MS. Add. 7,099, fol. 106.

^u Sharpe's William of Malms., p. 502.

^x Froissart, iv. 558.

appear to have been the reverse of those now prevailing, the earlier hour was then the hour of fashion. Lord Burghley, in 1583, was recommended by his physician to dine at nine or ten, and to sup at six or seven, as most conducive to health^y. "I never come into my dining-room," says a character in a play of Beaumont and Fletcher's, "but at eleven and six o'clock I find excellent meat and drink upon my table^z."

In the appliances of the table we may trace, by objects trifling to the eye, the tale of our progressive civilization, and find more in the chronicles of a spoon and in the history of a platter to tell us of the gradual recognition of taste and beauty, and the consequent refinement of a people, than we could glean from dignified records; and to read how a tablecloth was first received into domestic use, how the prevailing coarseness of manners ridiculously misapplied it, using it as a dishclout and for many a vile purpose; and how it became in time regarded as an article of cleanliness, and appreciated as one of the necessary refinements of domestic life, is an inquiry which, however trivial, may redeem itself from the charge of mere antiquarian inquisitiveness, from the amusing light it may throw on the history of our social progress.

During the middle ages the ceremony of spreading the cloth was one in the performance of *Laying the Cloth*, which much curious etiquette was to be observed. Two ushers entered the hall: they both knelt down, and, unfolding the cloth, commenced spreading it on the table at the lower end; when they reached the

^y MS. Lansdown, 40, 28.

^z Knight of the Burning Pestle. B. and F.'s Works, vol. vi. p. 377.

middle of the board they again made a low obeisance, and on arriving at the top they knelt a third time with the most profound reverence. This ridiculous ceremony was performed even if the hall was vacant. Like the board, the cloth was long and narrow; it was sometimes fringed with a deep border, which hung over the ends but left the front of the table exposed. The tablecloth was a valued article in all households: as early as the twelfth century we find it among the treasures of an Essex farmer; and in the thirteenth century it is frequently mentioned in the Subsidy Roll of Colchester^a. Like perhaps the sallar, and the silver spoon in the cupboard, it was reserved for occasions of family festivity, for we rarely find more than a single tablecloth enumerated. The borde-cloths on the tables of the rich were sometimes of the most costly material: those of the beautiful wrought linen called diaper, were the most esteemed. Bradshaw says:—

“The tables were covered with clothes of dyaper,
Rychly enlarged with silver and with golde.”

In the Romance of Cœur-de-Lion we read of a table on which

“Clothes of sylk theron was spred,”

And in Sir Eglamour that

“Whyte cloths sone they sprede^b.”

Edward IV. had tablecloths of diaper in his wardrobe^c, and Henry VIII. had some beautiful “borde-clothes” of damask, “rychly dyapered with the royal armes^d;”

^a Rolls Parl. i. 228, 265.

^b MS. Calig. A. ii. fol. 62.

^c MS. Harl. 4,780, fol. 33. b.

^d MS. Harl. 1419, p. 171. In an Inventory of 1562 we find a table-

and in the Ordinances made at Eltham in the time of that monarch, mention is made of table linen of "dyaper of damasene werke." These were costly treasures in Elizabethan homes. "A damaske tablecloth," says a character in an old play, "cost me eighteen pounds^e." In addition to the tablecloth, there was spread before the master of the house an article called *The Surnap*. the surnape. It was used for wiping the hands at the conclusion of the meal, when the laver was brought to the lord. The laying of the surnap was a mystery; minute directions are laid down in Royal Household Regulations relative to this important ceremony. It was the duty of the server to bring it and lay it on the board, when the usher was "to fest his rod in forsayd surnape," and draw it down the table, "doying hys reverence afore the kynge till hyt passe the borde ende a good way." The server and usher then knelt, one on each side, and taking the ends of the surnap, stretched and folded it over, so as to make the "pleyghte before the kynge^f." The manner of "drawing" the surnap at the coronation of Anne Boleyn is minutely described by John Stevens, marshal of the royal hall. On this occasion the Earl of Rutland had the honour of laying the surnap^g. At the table of the king it was sometimes placed before the bishop, and when his majesty wished to use it he made "a bek unto the bysshoppe^h." This article, which was in use only at the tables of the wealthy, was of the richest diaper,

cloth of "aryes."—(*Wills and Invent. published by Surtees Society*, iii. 162.)

^e Gifford's Ben Jonson's *Epicæne*, p. 398.

^f MS. Add. 4,712,

fol. 9; Harl. 305, fol. 3.

^g MS. Add., Brit. Mus., 6,113, fol. 34.

^h MS. Add. 4,712, fol. 4.

and often enriched with a border of gold and silver lace. In the Great Wardrobe of Henry VIII. was a "surnape clothe of launde, embranded w^t golde at bothe ends, and frenges at endes of goldeⁱ."

Whilst the stately surnap was thus ceremoniously placed before the master of the hall, towels were carried to the guests with the lavers:—

"Towelles of Eylysshā,
Whyght as the seeys fame,
Sanappus of the same,
Thus servyd thei werek^k."

This was the introduction of table napkins, than which there could be no more necessary ap-
Introduction of Table Napkins.
 pendage to a mediæval feast. Le Grand D'Aussy, writing in 1780, says that the table napkin was a recent introduction, and that he could not discover any evidence of its ancient use. He thinks that even in polite France people in those days must have wiped their hands on the tablecloth, "as the English still do who do not use napkins." We may however claim for the English the merit of appreciating this cleanly article of domestic use at a time when the French were certainly in the habit of soiling the damask. An old French writer cautions his reader not to wipe his nose on the tablecloth; and a poet writing on the etiquette of the table, informs his pupils that it is not polite to wipe their greasy hands and mouths on the cloth^l. Although Le Grand could not refer to the use of napkins in early times, we find "napkyns de Reynes," or white linen, among the effects of Henry V.^m;

ⁱ MS. Harl. 4,217, sec. 10.

^k Thornton Romances, p. 235.

^l La Continence de la Table. ^m Rot. Parl., vol. iv. p. 228.

and in a manuscript written in 1452 we have these lines :—

“Youre spoonys and napkyns fayre folde woulde be,
Lay thy souveraynes napkyns clenelyⁿ.”

In the time of Henry VIII. towels and napkins were made abroad expressly for our English nobility. They were manufactured in France and Flanders, with the arms and initials of our sovereigns°. Henry VIII. had “fayre table napkins,” on which were diapered the “Salutation of oure Ladye^p.” In 1561 the Carpenters’ Guild purchased, at a cost of 4*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.*, a tablecloth, and three dozen napkins of diaper; but the use of these napkins at table was considered a mark of distinction, to which the livery, but not the yeomanry, of the Company were entitled^q.

From this period they were generally introduced in fashionable society in addition to the towels, which were still brought round with the lavers by the ewerer and his attendants. In old inventories we meet with towels of diaper, with “Stafforde knottes,” English Napery. with “flower de luces,” with “birdes eyes,” and “plaine towels of fyne cameriche^r.” These introductions are indicative of a growing refinement of manners, but it was considered etiquette to spare the napkins as much as possible :—

“Soille not thy naperys for no reckelesnesse^s.”

Whilst cups and vessels of “honest tre” contented the many, so long as they could fill them, the tables

ⁿ MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 5.

° Archæologia, vol. xxvii. p. 421.

^p MS. Harl. 1,419, fol. 173.

^q Jupp’s Hist. of Carpenters’

Company, p. 203.

^r MS. Harl. 1,419, fol. 174.

^s MS. Calig. A. ii. fol. 13.

of the higher classes often glittered with a rich display of plate. The mediæval workers in gold were marvellously ingenious in the fabrication of articles for the table: the wooden bowl was supplanted by a drinking-cup, turned gracefully like the calix of a flower, and which the French called a *gobet*, or goblet. Many drinking vessels of chaste and elegant design, of the thirteenth and succeeding centuries, are in existence, or are represented in illuminated manuscripts, and testify to the splendour of the table garniture in mediæval homes^t. But the abundance of articles of gold and silver possessed by many of the nobility must not altogether be regarded as a sign of luxury; on a political or family emergency the nobles, and even the king himself, sold or pledged the household plate^u. Henry III. did so to raise the dower for his daughter Margaret; the ransom of Richard of the Lion Heart was not made up with coin, but by contributions of baronial goblets and salvers. Plate was indeed the most portable and convenient species of personal wealth: thus consolidated, the baron could conceal his treasure in time of war, and gratify his pride by displaying it in time of peace; advantages which sufficiently compensated for the loss sustained

Reasons for
the accumula-
tion of House-
hold Plate.

^t A service of plate presented by Edward I. to his daughter Margaret contained, among other articles, 46 silver cups, 120 small plates, and 72 spoons.—(*Lib. Gard.* 25 Ed. I., 1297.)

^u Certain articles of plate and jewellery were delivered by Henry V. to John Clyff, a minstrel, as security for a sum owing by the King. Among them, "a silver lantern gilt, with a foot; a silver gilt ewer engraved with the royal arms, and another with stags; three candelabras of silver, and a coffer gilt and enamelled."—(*Issue Roll*, 12 Hen. VI.)

by reducing it to ingots in times of necessity. That the family plate was often so sacrificed is certain, which is the reason that the goldsmith's craft was, during the middle ages, of all the manufacturing arts the most lucrative, and that the members of that honourable fraternity were so numerous in proportion to what we might suppose the general requirements of society. The growth of banking checked this accumulation of household plate.

The platters and trenchers in general use were of pewter or wood. Counterfeit vessels of pewter were for the feast, while those of wood or Platters and Trenchers of "Tre" and Pewter. "tre" were for everyday service; the latter were sometimes square^x and made of white maple. It was the usage in domestic economy when a garnish of pewter was worn, to exchange it for a new service by paying the difference in the value of the metal. London platters were famous for their superior make, and were coveted even by the housewives of the North^y. At a later period Harrison says that even "beyond sea" a garnish of good flat English pewter was esteemed almost as precious as silver^z.

These matters may perhaps be regarded as undignified and trivial, but there are few of such domestic details that are not associated with some curious ceremony, some quaint custom, or some chivalric usage, which may perhaps unexpectedly illustrate some old author whose

^x *Vetusta Monumenta*, vi. pl. xxi.; and in the dinner scenes in the *Chronicles of England*, MS. Bib. Reg. 14, E. iv., in Brit. Mus., large square platters are placed before the king and his guests, fol. ccxxv., cclvi.

^y *Wills and Inventories* published by Surtees Society, iii. 219.

^z *Chron.* i. 237.

allusions would be otherwise obscure. Thus, in connexion with platters, there was a domestic custom often alluded to in romance, which did not, as some have supposed, originate with any want of refinement, but from a feeling of friendship and politeness: this was the custom of the knight and his lady eating off the same trencher, and drinking from the same hanap. A lover gloried at receiving such a mark of condescension from his "ladye love," and the fair equally appreciated this gallant usage. A lady in romance, whom her jealous lord compelled to dine in the kitchen, bitterly complains that it was long since a knight had eaten on the same plate with her at table^a. In the "Proces of the Seven Sages," we read of a lady who, to shew her affection, sat next to her husband,—

"Yat yai might of a platere ete^b."

And alluding to the conjugal love that existed between another happy twain, we are told,—

"Yat ilk day she and hir lorde,
Sold both togeder ete of a borde^c."

This gave rise to the pleasant usage of seating a lady and gentleman side-by-side at table. In the *Histoire de Perceforrest* we read of a magnificent entertainment at which eight hundred chevaliers were seated at table, and by the side of each sat a damsel who ate off his plate^d. This in an age of chivalry must have lent a charm to the feast, and afforded opportunities for those tender expressions of regard, and for the celebration of those little conceits with which the feast was enlivened.

^a Launcelet de Lac.

^c Ibid., fol. 41. b.

^b MS. Galba, ix. fol. 33. a.

^d Vol. i. p. 21.

This loving custom became gradually abolished. The Italians have been accused of a rudeness of manners in retaining it so late as the age of Frederick II. ^e; but in England, old-fashioned couples, carrying the customs of their youth with them in their age, have clung to this usage, and as they grew old together ate lovingly off the same plate, deeming it a happy boast that for so many years they had done so without strife. As late as the year 1752 the Duke and Duchess of Hamilton sat at the upper end of their table, and ate off the same plate ^f.

This custom was rendered less agreeable by the prodigal use which was made of the fingers during the repast. It was not every damsel who recollected the advice of Ovid, whose "Art of Love," however, was a great favourite among them :—

"Your meat genteelly with your fingers raise,
And as in eating there's a certain grace,
Beware with greasy hands lest you besmear your face."

Spoons of wood, of bone, or of silver, some tastefully or quaintly ornamented, were placed by the side of the knife at table ^g. But it was the custom during the middle ages for the gentlemen to bring their own knives. Spoons and
Knives. Lydgate cautions those

^e Hallam, Middle Ages, new edition, vol. iii. p. 342.

^f Walpole's Letters, third edition, vol. iii. p. 18. See also Notes and Queries, vol. xii. p. 245.

^g In MS. Bib. Reg. 14 Edw. iv. p. cccxxv., are represented knives with gilt hafts, on the table. The handles of the spoons were sometimes in the form of a grotesque figure. At a later period we find "spones of silver having maidens heads at the end, gilt."—(*MS. temp. Hen. VIII. Cottonian, Appendix xxviii. fol. 171.*)

who wish to gain the reputation of a man of courtesy to

“Bryng no knyvyys unscouryd to ye table^h.”

These were probably clasp knives, carried in their satchels, or with a handle in a sheath in their girdle, like Chaucer’s Pilgrims:—

“Ychaped not with bras,

But al with silver wrought ful clene and wel:”

and which also served as an indication of their estate, for tradesmen and mechanics were prohibited by the sumptuary laws from using knives adorned with gold, silver, or precious stonesⁱ. Gaston, Count de Foix, carried in his pocket the knife with which he used to cut his meat at table^k. They sometimes proved dangerous weapons, especially when the wine had circulated freely. Lord John Grey was committed in the time of Edward III. for drawing his knife on Lord Zouche^l. In the old Romance of Richard Cœur-de-Lion we read of one who

“His knife drew out of his shethe,

Therwithe to do the steward scathe^m.”

Sheffield cutlery was celebrated in the time of Chaucer:—

“A Sheffield whitel bare he in his hose.”

As it was thus the custom for the guest to bring his own knife, a whetstone hung in the passage behind the screen, so that he might sharpen it before sitting down to tableⁿ: perhaps they were also carried with the

^h MS. Calig. A. ii. fol. 13. a.

ⁱ Rot. Parl., vol. ii. pp. 278, 281. This was in 1363.

^k Froissart, iv. 98.

^l Rot. Parl., vol. ii. p. 656.

^m Line 2,137.

ⁿ Ritson’s note on Timon of Athens.

knife, for in 1565 Queen Elizabeth presented the Earl of Leicester with a whetstone tipped with gold °.

The history of the table-fork has been the subject of much curious comment and diligent research.

The antiquary is often surprised by the discovery of traces of useful inventions, which he can scarcely reconcile with the manners of the olden time; he can bring some incidental allusion, or can evidence some solitary example to prove that many articles of domestic economy which appear solely to appertain to modern times were in fact invented centuries ago, but being in the absence of a refined taste unappreciated, they were utterly neglected by our forefathers. Thus, although not often in use until the sixteenth century, the table-fork was known at an early period. Its invention may be traced to the East, and it was first introduced into Europe by the Venetians. Peter Damian, who wrote in the eleventh century, in one of his epistles, speaking of a fair damsel from Constantinople who had been married to a Doge of Venice, declares that her habits of luxury surpassed all conscience. She would not even eat as other people did, but had her meat cut into little pieces, and then conveyed them to her mouth with a two-pronged fork^p! Probably our thanks are due to this naughty princess for the introduction of the table-fork into Europe. We first find this article mentioned among our English records in the thirteenth century. Among the jewels of Edw. I. was a fork of crystal, presented to his majesty by Mary of Bretagne, Countess of St. Pol. Piers Gaveston, in

The History
of Table-forks.

° MS. Additional, Brit. Mus., 5,751, fol. 301.

^p Pet. Damian, lib. vii. ep. xix. p. 79.

the reign of Edward II., possessed three silver forks for eating pears, “pour mangier poires^q.” John, Duke of Brittany, in 1306, used one of silver to pick up “soppys^r.” Le Grand could find no notice of forks earlier than 1379, at which period they are mentioned in an inventory of the jewels of Charles V.^s In a memorandum of the Treasury dated the 14th Henry IV. we find a fork of crystal, and another of silver enumerated^t; and in the Wardrobe Accounts of Henry VII. is recorded a payment of twelve shillings to Master Brent for a fork of silver weighing three ounces^u. It is only in this scattered and incidental way that we find any allusion to this useful article previous to the sixteenth century, when they began to appear on the banqueting tables. Among the treasures of Henry VIII. were metal spoons with glass handles, and forks of metal gilt, “the stales being of glasse^x.” In the reign of Elizabeth eleven knives and a fork was the usual dessert set. The hafts were of ivory or silver gilt, engraved with ornaments or initials. Many sets are enumerated among the jewels of Elizabeth; the forks were used for taking up the Indian preserves which were then in high esteem, and were called “ginger forks^y.” The common use of the fork was one

^q Rymer, *Fœdera*, tom. iii. p. 392.

^r Dom. Morice, *Hist. Bret. Preuves*, tom. i. p. 1202.

^s “Quarente-trois cuelleres et fourchettes” of gold, and garnished with pearls and gems.—(*Montfaucon, Monumens de la France*, vol. iii. p. 56.)

^t *Ancient Kalendars and Inventories*, vol. ii. p. 87.

^u MS. Additional, Brit. Mus., 7,099, fol. 62.

^x MS. Harl. 1,419, fol. 145, b.

^y MS. Harl. 1,650, fol. 118—120. “Beef forks,” and a fork or two of crystal, are mentioned in an inventory of the furniture of the

of the memorable things observed by Thomas Coryat, when travelling through Italy in 1608. He saw it used in no other country, and he did not think that it was used by any other nation in Christendom, but he so admired the novelty that he introduced it at table in England. The wits of the sixteenth, as did Peter Damian in the eleventh century, regarded its use as an indication of foppery. Poor Coryat was laughed at for his pains, and nicknamed 'Furcifer the fork-bearer.' Until late indeed in the seventeenth century this introduction was the subject of many a joke among the dramatic and satirical writers of the age, and a divine even went so far as to declare that the use of forks was a tacit insult to Providence who had given us fingers; but in spite of this, the invention was welcomed into use, and among the plate of Charles I. we find "sets of twelve forks^z."

In ancient times one of the most im- The Saltcellar.
portant articles on the table was the salt-cellar.

"Loke your salte be whyte, clene and dry,
And the stande for your salte made of ivory^a."

But it was often made of gold, frequently of silver, and sometimes fashioned in strange devices. Edward III. had a salt enamelled all over with baboons and little birds^b. Edmund, Earl of March, left, in 1380, to his son and daughter each a silver salt in the shape of a dog^c. In an illuminated manuscript in the British Museum there are representations of saltcellars in the

Countess of Essex in 1635, but no dinner forks. (*Additional Roll in Brit. Mus.*, 18,985.)

^z MS. Harl. 4,898, fol. 20.

^a MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 3. a.

^b Archæol., vol. x. p. 247.

^c Test. Vetusta, vol. i. p. 111.

form of a chariot or waggon, on four wheels, for the convenience of passing them down the table^d. Among the plate belonging to Mercers' Hall, there was a large salt resembling the White Tower of London. Until a late period it was the especial ornament of the table. Those among the plate of Henry and Elizabeth were very beautiful: Charles I. had a saltcellar of gold, richly enamelled, supported by the quaint figure of an old woman; it was purchased, at the dispersion of the royal furniture, by Mr. Shirley^e. The peculiar notions prevalent respecting the efficacy of salt, caused the "saller" to be looked upon with reverence, and many a curious old custom was observed in reference to it. Many never helped themselves to a portion without throwing a pinch over the left shoulder; others ejaculated a blessing as they laid it on their trencher; it was thought most unlucky to spill it, and to help another to salt was sadly ominous of evil. The great saltcellar which was placed midway on the table formed a boundary of distinction: all seated between it and the head of the table were the honoured and distinguished guests, whilst those of inferior rank were seated below it. Our ancestors sometimes placed their guests below the salt in order to mortify them. Salts inferior in size and material were placed on the side tables, but the same gradations of rank were there observed. When Richard Cœur-de-Lion took the

Folk-lore re-
specting Salt.

^d MS. Additional 12,228, fol. 6, 9, 226. Among the jewels of Henry VI. was a "saler" of gold, resembling "a man w^t a Kendale hood upon hys hede, standyng upon a carrage" garnished with gems.—(*Ancient Kalends and Invent.*, vol. iii. p. 255.)

^e MS. Harl. 4,898, fol. 25. a.

lion's heart into the hall of the King of Almaine, he found—

“ The king at meste, sat on dees,
With dukes and erls prowde in pres,
The salar on the table stood ^f.”

And when the Saracens were feasted,—

“ They were set at syde tables,
Salt was set on.”

To take salt with becoming courtesy was an accomplishment. Cardinal Richelieu is said to have detected an impostor in one who had passed himself off as a noble by the way he helped himself to olives, and perhaps in old time nothing was so indicative of good breeding as the manner of taking salt. Vulgar *burgoises* or untaught villains took it with their fingers, or dipped their meat into the “saller.” An old poet says this

“ Is a vyce as men me telles.”

And Lydgate writes :—

“ Whereso be thou dyne or soupe,
Of gentynesse take salte w^t thy knyfe ^g.”

Salt spoons, it would appear, not being as yet generally introduced.

An article which we now enjoy in profusion was rarely seen on the tables of our ancestors. ^{Introduction of Glass at Table.} The poets, who are often minute in their description of the festive scene, make no mention of glass; if such articles graced European homes previous to the fourteenth century, they were among the rarest

^f Line 1,097.

^g MS. Calig. A. ii. fol. 13. b. See also *La Contenance de la Table*, published by the Roxburgh Club.

importations from the Eastern Empire. We have a solitary allusion to the presence of glass at table in the Romance of Alexander:—

“Alexaunder he old the deys,
He deede serve Olimpias,
In golde and selver, in bras, in glas^h.”

Utensils of rock crystal somewhat supplied the place of glass, cruets mounted with gold were among the treasures of the table. Some of the articles described in old inventories as of crystal may have been of glass; a pot, a crusdyn, and a goblet of crystal are enumerated in a memorandum of the treasury in the 14th Henry IV.¹ A “standing glass” is the only article of this material mentioned in the Wardrobe Accounts of Edward IV.² Glass bottles were introduced in the fifteenth century, and were sold at Ipswich at sixpence a-piece¹. From this period we can easily trace its use in English homes. The Venetians, who had acquired from Constantinople a knowledge of the glass-making art, and who had enticed Greek artizans into Venice, were becoming famous for the manufacture of cups, vases, and other utensils of glass, which for beauty of design, being modelled after the choicest examples of antiquity, were universally esteemed and admired.

Among the drinking vessels, the hanap and grace-cup were the most distinguished. The hanap
The Hanap
and Grace-cup.
 was a standing cup, raised on foot and stem, and often ornamented with the highest efforts of art^m.

^h Webber, *Metrical Romances*, i.

¹ *Ancient Kalendars, &c.*, ii. 86.

^k MS. Harl. 4780, fol. 28, b.

¹ *Household Manners and*

Expences, p. 303.

^m Among the jewels of Charles V. were hanaps garnished, pearls,

The Duchess of Gloucester, in 1390, left a beautiful hanap of crystal, mounted on a foot of gold, with a cover of gold, in the handle or "pomel" of which was set a large sapphireⁿ. We also read of a hanap of gold covered with "kyry myry" work, and escutcheons bearing the arms of France and England on the top^o. When the clerk asked a benediction, it was long the profane custom to drink from the grace-cup to the honour of a saint, or even to the Trinity. Grace-cups of elegant design have been preserved, and have been rendered familiar by the recent exhibitions of art. A beautiful specimen, said to have belonged to Thomas à Becket, has been shewn to belong to the sixteenth century^p.

A more popular drinking-vessel was the maser, the homely bowl of mottled wood, highly polished *The Maser.* by use, and so esteemed for its fantastic veining : it was long the favourite drinking-vessel in convivial society. The maser appeared not only on the table of the noble, but every franklin, and almost every artizan, possessed one among his household treasures^q. It was encircled with godly mottoes, or with such welcomes and hearty

rubies, and emeralds. Montfauçon, *Monumens de la Monarch. Fran.*, iii. p. 56. Henry VI. had one adorned with diamonds and pearls. *Ancient Kalend. and Invent.*, ii. p. 118.

ⁿ Royal Wills.

^o *Ancient Kalend.*, ii. 117.

^p Nichols' *Pilgrimages to Walsingham and Canterbury*, p. 229.

^q *Rot. Parl.*, i. 228. We often meet with maser-cups, which were the little masers called godards in old inventories. *Ancient Kalendars and Invent.*, ii. 251. The large ones were called standing masers; thus one belonging to Henry VI. is described as a "standing maser" of silver and gilt, with the arms of England and France, and writ with a "poyse" of "Good Edward." *Ibid.*

good wishes as those with which Englishmen loved to greet their gossips, and at the bottom was often represented the figure of St. Christopher, which every Bacchanalian did his best to behold. The maser derived its name from the maple-wood of which it was originally made, but subsequently the term was applied to the shape rather than to the material. Thus we read of masers of gold, of silver, and of others enriched with enamel. It was in form similar to the more ancient wassail-bowl, but the wassail was for occasions of great festivity, whilst the maser was in constant domestic requisition. They were placed at intervals along the table:—

“Ther was wine ful clere,
In mony a fure mazere,
And other drynkes that were dere,
In copes ful grete^r.”

The goldsmiths of the middle ages appear to have bestowed their utmost ingenuity and the highest efforts of their art upon the decoration of drinking vessels. Few indeed have been preserved, their weight, and the gems with which they were enriched, ensured their destruction amidst the changes of fashion. Although described in ancient inventories only for the purposes of identification, we yet learn how many specimens, designed and adorned with the artistic beauties of the trecento and quartocento periods, graced the buffets of the English nobility. Among the plate of Edward II. was a cup of gold, quaintly enamelled with baboons^s; and among the jewels of Edward III. were cups enamelled with leo-

Decorative Art
in Table Gar-
niture.

^r MS. Vernon, quoted in Warton, *Hist. of Poetry*, vol. ii.

^s Ancient *Kalendars and Inventories*, iii. 127.

pards^t, and a standing-cup of silver, enamelled with various animals, had depicted on each side of its triangular foot the images of the kings of England, France, and Spain^u. Edmund Earl of March left in 1380 a cup of silver gilt enamelled with the sports of children^x, and the Countess of Warwick left a cup enamelled with dogs^v. This species of ornamentation seems to have been highly prized by fashion during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The beautiful enamels of Limoges were known and valued in England, and increased a taste for an art which became applied to almost every article of table garniture.

Limoges
Enamel.

In the absence of many of those little appliances that we now possess, the custom of washing before and after meals was essential to ensure any degree of personal comfort. This in the old times was performed with much ceremony, and the guests were sometimes accompanied by the pipes of the minstrels to a separate apartment, called a lavatory, but the more general custom was for the domestics to bring the ewers and towels into the hall, and to hand them round to the company. The water was perfumed with the sweet extract of flowers, with—

Washing be-
fore and after
Meals.

The Ewers, or
Lavers.

“Basyn and ewere,
Water of ever-rose clere,
They wasche ryzth there^z.”

And the lavers, which were commonly made of latten or brass, were, in the homes of wealth, of gold and silver,

^t MS. Cottonian, Nero, c. viii. fol. 319.

^u Arch., x. p. 252.

^x Royal Wills, p. 112.

^v Test. Vetusta, p. 78.

^z Thornton Rom., p. 235.

richly "pounced" and enamelled. Edward II. had an ewer ornamented with chivalry, and his favourite Gaveston had among his plate basins and ewers enamelled with his arms^a. An ewer of silver-gilt is described among the jewels of Edward III. as triangular in shape, enamelled with the images of the kings of Denmark, Germany, and Arragon^b. This monarch appears to have expended large sums in such luxuries; his plate was exceedingly beautiful^c, and on one occasion 133*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* was paid for an ewer of gold, encrusted with precious stones, for his Majesty's use^d. This was equal to more than 2,000*l.* of our currency. In the will of John Duke of Exeter, dated 1447, an ewer is described as decorated with a falcon taking a partridge, with a ruby in his mouth^e. But these examples are surpassed by the magnificent washing-basins belonging to Henry VI., which were richly chased, pounced, and enamelled, garnished with precious stones, and covered with "kermery" work^f. Perhaps the most costly were a pair of gold, the description of which conveys some idea of the decorative art of the period: they were chased in the "maner of roses," pounced with "grete boseletts," garnished with divers escutcheons, and in the inside were enamelled the arms of St. George, St. Edmund, and St. Edward, the arms of the Emperor, the arms of England and France, and the arms of the principalities and of the duchy of Guienne. These

^a Rymer, *Fœdera*, tom. iii. p. 391.

^b *Archæologia*, vol. x. p. 252.

^c See MS. Cottonian, Nero, c. viii. fol. 319; also *Ancient Kalendars and Inventories*, iii. 165.

^d *Issue Rolls Excheq.*, 26 Edw. III.

^e *Royal Wills*, p. 284.

^f Probably filigree-work. *Ancient Kalendars and Inventories*, vol. ii. p. 166. Cup with kыrymyry-work. *Ibid.*, pp. 117 and 202.

splendid basins were valued at 458l.^g, a sum now equal to 5,000l.

These rich lavers were for the guests at the high table, and were first taken by the ewerer with much ceremony to the master's seat. Nobles held the basin for the king, and the esquire for the baron. The Duke of Brittany had the honour of holding the laver and towel for the King of France^h. It was etiquette that none should wash until the master of the house had set the example, the performance of this ceremony being regarded as the commencement of the meal. "May it please you to wash" was the expression used in announcing that dinner was readyⁱ. When Edward III. visited the beautiful Countess of Salisbury, he was shewn into a richly decorated chamber until the dinner was placed upon the table. The Countess then went to the king and said,—“Come, Sire, to hall, your knights are waiting for you to wash, for they as well as yourself have fasted too long^k.”

The company having washed and seated themselves at table, the chaplain stood up, and in a loud voice asked a blessing. The almoner then en-^{The Almoner and the Alms-dish.}tered, bearing in one hand his rod of office, and in the other the alms-dish, which he set upon the table. The carver, who stood by, commenced his duty with an act of charity. “To serve God first,” he placed a loaf upon the dish, to which, during the repast, he added frequent contributions. It was the almoner's office to look after the broken meat, to see that the domestics swept with the

^g Ancient Kalend. and Invent., vol. ii. pp. 145, 168.

^h Froissart, iii. 139.

ⁱ See Romantic History of Melusine, MS. Regis in Brit. Mus., B. ii. fol. 119.

^k Froissart, i. 76.

voiding knife even the crumbs and fragments into the maunds, or alms-baskets, and that all was carried away and safely locked in the almery, to be distributed in due course to "pore men at y^e gate." "Command ye," said the good Bishop Grosteste, in his Rules for the Government of a Family, "that youre almes be kepyd, and not sende out to boys and knafis, nother in the hall, nother out of the hall, ne be wasted in soperys ne dyners of gromys, but wisely, temperatly, and withoute bate or betyng, be hit distributed and deportyd to poure men, beggers, syke folke, and febull¹."

This good and benevolent custom became with some a mere matter of ostentation, for if we are to believe the satirical writers of the age, coarse bread was often placed on a golden dish, and when a guest charitably threw in a portion of the dainties served to him on his platter, the kitchen knaves were allowed to filch them from the poor. As an honourable custom, however, its observance was long continued, and the alms-dish, by the quaint but godly mottoes with which it was encircled, often reminded those who were feasting of those who fasted, and silently claimed amidst the festive pageantry a tribute for the poor. As pleasing relics of old domestic life there are few objects more interesting than the alms-dish, and we may form some idea of their size in ancient times from the fact, that one engraved with

¹ MS. Sloane, Brit. Mus., 1,986, p. 194. "And because hertofore relicts and fragments of meate and drinke have not bin duly distributed unto poore folke by waie of almes...it is the king's pleasure that all fragments be gathered by the officer of the almery, and to be given to the pore people at the utter gate."—*MS. Cottonian, Vesp., C. xiv.* fol. 231.

the arms of the Lovells weighed twenty-two pounds, three ounces of silver ^m.

The ecclesiastics who introduced the alms-dish into domestic use, also introduced the nef, The Nef, or Ship. or ship. Frankincense was burned in vessels of this form on the altars of the Continental churches during the middle ages, and they are repeatedly mentioned among the ecclesiastical ornaments. Among the church jewels of Charles V. of France were thirty-two "encensiers et navettes," and a great ship of gold, which may perhaps have been for the table; it is described as having angels at the ends, with lions of gold and escutcheons enamelled with the arms of France ⁿ. Le Grand affirms that it was first used at table for the salt and napkin of the master of the house ^o, and one belonging to Charles V. was for holding the cup of assay, the spoon, the knife, and the fork of the king ^p. In an inventory of the jewels of Piers Gaveston taken in 1313, we find a ship of silver for incense (*une nef d'argent pur encens*) on four wheels, and enamelled on the sides ^q. Among the plate and jewels of Edward III., *una navis* of silver is mentioned, also on wheels, and having the figure-head of a dragon ^r. In England this article appears to have been introduced on the table for receiving any contributions of alms in money which the guests might feel disposed to offer, and the proceeds of which were probably in the dispensation of the chaplain. In a

^m Ancient Kalend. and Invent., ii. p. 128.

ⁿ Montfaucon, Monumens de la Monarch. Fran., iii. p. 56.

^o La Vie Privée, iii. 188.

^p Labarte, Handbook of the Arts of the Middle Ages, p. 226.

^q Rymer, Fœdera, iii. 390. ^r MS. Cottonian, Nero, C. viii fol. 319. a.

splendid volume of the Chronicles of England in the British Museum there are two examples of the ship. At a feast given to Richard II., a domestic is represented as bringing a ship into the hall shaped exactly like the vessels of the period, with mast and rigging, and apparently of gold; and in another dinner-scene, a ship on a circular stand or foot, but without mast or rigging, appears on a buffet with other plate^s, which was in shape no doubt similar to the "elemosynary dish, newly made in the form of a ship," mentioned in the will of Bishop Wykeham, who died in 1404, and to the "elemosinaria, called a great ship of silver," mentioned in a memorandum of the Treasury^t. An elaborate and beautiful example is described among the jewels of Henry VI., as a "grete almes disshe of silver, overgilte, made in the maner of a shippe, ful of men at armes feyghtyng upon the shippe syde." In this costly specimen of art decoration were sixty-seven pounds and eleven ounces of silver^u. But Henry VI. had a still larger and more valuable *nef*, that occasionally graced his table. It was known in the royal household by the name of the Tiger, and was richly garnished with pearls and precious stones. It was only however when the finances of the King were flourishing that this beautiful ship appeared on the buffet, for his Majesty found the Tiger a most convenient pledge upon which to raise money in his necessities. Henry of Winchester, Cardinal of England, lent large sums upon it on several occasions; and at one time Richard Duke of York advanced 400*l.*, a

^s MS. Regis 14 E. IV., fol. 1 and 256.

^t Ancient Kalendars and Invent., ii. 114.

^u Ibid., ii. p. 185.

sum equivalent perhaps to nearly 4,500*l.* of our currency, upon this valuable and most useful piece of royal plate^x. The ship is not often mentioned as an article of domestic use after the fifteenth century, although it occasionally occurs in the Tudor age; it is referred to in a letter of Queen Mary^y; among the jewels of Elizabeth were several ships of silver gilt^z; and with the plate of Charles I. found after his defeat was a silver nef, containing a salt-cellar, knife, and his *assai*^a.

As in the baronial hall no opportunity was lost to add ceremony and dignity to the affairs of every-day life, the bringing in of the dishes was ^{Bringing in the Courses.} often a domestic pageantry, which was performed after the guests were seated at the table. The servants first arranged the dishes on a slab, called the "dressyng borde^b," or "borde of servyng," usually placed behind the screen, and when they had received the approval of the steward or butler, the procession was formed. The marshal of the hall led the train, holding the grace-cup and spice-plate of the lord; the almoner carried the alms-dish, and the assayer, holding the assay-cup, was followed by the carver, around whose neck was slung a towel,—

"To clene his knyffys that bene so kene^c."

The cook or the server bore the first dish, decorated with a grand device. A body of yeomen followed, each

^x Ancient Kalend. and Invent., vol. ii. pp. 165, 148, 168, and 171.

^y Ellis's Letters, first series, vol. ii. p. 61.

^z MS. Harl. 1650, fol. 130.

^a Labarte, Handbook, p. 226.

^b MS. Sloane, 1315, fol. 13 a.

^c MS. Sloane, 1986, fol. 42.

carrying a savoury burden, and the waferers with boars' heads in castles, and other wondrous "subtilties" of "subtile cooks' devices," increased and adorned the festive procession. It was welcomed into the hall with the music of clarions and bagpipes:—

"Fro kechene came the first cours,
With pipes and trumpes and tabours ^d."

Those who thus carried the dishes were never to raise the cover "for suspycyn of treson," and so fearful were they in the old time of poison and hidden treachery, that not a dish was tasted nor a cup held to the lips of the lord until it had undergone the process of the assay. The assayer and his office is a curious but unpleasing trait connected with the early history of our home. From the first of our Norman kings to the days of James I. our forefathers ate their meals in fear, and did not consider their lives safe without the supervision of one whose duty it was to detect the wiles of the poisoner or himself become his victim. The ceremony of the assay was always observed at the tables of the great. In the royal household, the physician fulfilled this office; he first cut off pieces of the various viands, which were tasted by the domestics, and himself partook of those dishes especially designed for the high board. It was a mark of respect to appoint an assayer to a guest. It was the absence of the assay that excited the suspicion of Richard II. at Pomfret Castle. Sir Piers Exton, designing to poison the King, forbade the "esquire whiche was accustomed to serve and take the assaye

^d Rich. Cœur de Lion, l. 3, 127.

beefore Kyng Richarde, to again use that maner of service." The King, says Hall, "sat downe to dyner, and was served withoute curtisie or assaye; he much mer-vaylyng at the sodayne mutacion of the thyng, de-manded of the esquire why he did not his duty." When the esquire replied that he had been forbidden to do so by Sir Piers, the King, snatching up a carv-ing-knife, struck the assayer on the head, exclaim-ing,—“The devil take Henry of Lancaster and thee together^e!” The numerous instances of poisoning which history records prove that the cautious usage of the assay was not without its necessity.

When the hanap was filled for the master of the house, a portion of the same liquor was poured into *The Assay Cup*, the assay cup, to which, attached by a chain of gold or embedded in the bottom of the vessel, was a charm, usually a carbuncle of great value, or a piece of the tusk of the narwhal, which passed for the unicorn's horn, and which was reputed to possess the rare virtue of neutralizing and even detecting the presence of poison. Edward IV. gave to the ambassador of Charles of Burgundy a cup of gold, garnished with pearls and a great sapphire; and “in the myddes of the cuppe ys a grete pece of an Vnicornes horne,” which, says the admiring chronicler, was “to my estimacyon vij. inches compas^f!”

The preparation and ceremony attending the laying the cloth and the garnishing the table, en-grossed the best hours of the day, and the dishes were often so rare and luxurious, according to

Luxurious
living.

^e Hall's Chronicle, ed. 1548, fol. 14. ^f MS. Addit. 6,113, fol. 104. b.

the notions of the time, that my lord's estate became seriously impoverished in supporting such bounteous hospitality. In the fourteenth century the middle class too began to follow the example of the rich, and domestic luxury became so excessive that a law was made in 1336 to restrain it. It sets forth, that in consequence of maintaining such costly tables, the people were unable to help "their liege lord" in time of need as they ought; and it was therefore enacted, that no man, of what estate soever, should cause himself to be served at dinner or supper with more than two courses, which were to be accompanied with only the commonest sorts of potage, and with no sauces^s. Laws, however, that interfered with domestic habits were never very rigidly observed; the love of good cheer long continued to prevail, and we are astonished at the rude abundance of the feast. Mediæval professors of the art of cury use large terms in their cookery. "Take," say they, "a bear and seth him;" "take a multon, hak him and serve him." Oxen and sheep were boiled entire, and we are not surprised that it required a stalwart esquire to fulfil the office of a carver. The process of separating the carcass into joints was performed in the kitchen, and before being taken to table they were invariably smothered in sauce.

Our forefathers were great lovers of "piquant sauce." They made it of expensive condiments and *Piquant Sauce.* rare spices. Peter Damian, writing in the time of William the Conqueror to a lady who had entered into a convent, says that he feared the potherbs of the refectory would not prove very acceptable to one who had

^s Stat. Realm i. 279. 10 Ed. III.

been accustomed to delicacies brought from over sea, and made more delicate still with Indian sauces^h. In the statute of Edward III. to restrain high living, before quoted, the use of sauce is prohibited unless it could be procured at a very moderate cost. Sauce-makers are mentioned among a roll of the citizens of York at the beginning of the fourteenth centuryⁱ. The ingredient most commonly used in English sauce was saffron, with which it was the taste to have every dish flavoured or garnished. It was introduced at a very early period, and much used in the time of Edward I. We read of a "saffron tub" in the kitchen of Bishop Swinfield in 1296. Three saffron plants appeared in the arms of the corporation of Saffron Walden, a famous market for this article; it was very expensive, for in the time of Henry VI. the Duke of Buckingham, whilst residing at Writtle in Essex, paid 18s. 10d. a pound for the saffron used in his kitchen^k. This was equivalent to about 10% at present, and well might Chaucer say of the poor widow,—

"Of poynant sauce ne knew she ne never a dele."

Saffron was often cultivated in the herbaries of the manor-houses and castles. Lord Howard gave fourpence for a new lock to his saffron garden, and workmen were engaged to repair the pan upon which the saffron was prepared and dried^l.

The mediæval Cooks were fond of serving up the viands in coffins. A peacock, still ^{Viands in} "Coffyn Cotes," retaining in death all the glory of its plu-

^h Epist., lib. vii. ep. xix.

^k MS. Additional, 5,962.

ⁱ Proceedings of Yorkshire Phil. Society.

^l Household Expences, pp. 105, 292.

mage, was brought to table in his coffin; young "conyngs" were confined, porpoises and dolphins were confined,—not in coffins of wood, but of paste, the term being applied to the crusty covering.

In the days of chivalry various duties and ceremonies were connected with the principal dishes. On the occasion of tournaments and pageants, or at royal feasts, a peacock or pheasant "enhalkyall" or roasted, was served up with extraordinary grandeur. It was brought to table in a coffin of "payne puff," with neck erect and tail expanded above the crust, with beak and comb richly gilded; it was borne into the hall on a gold or silver charger, and heralded in with the blast of trumpets and clarions. With scrupulous ceremony it was placed before the knight whose prowess had won the laurels of the day. With much solemnity the hero rose, and as he broke the crust, he called perhaps St. George or the Virgin to witness his vow, that he would hew down the Turks in Palestine, or rescue captive beauty from the snares of giant monsters. Need we say that these vows of the valiant knight were like the pie-crust before him, made but to be broken, and that their oft-repeated violation gave rise to a homely but too truthful proverb?

Swans were also introduced at feasts, being admired for their large size. At an entertainment given to Richard II., fifty of these royal birds were provided for the occasion^m; they were considered in season at Michaelmas, and in the household of Queen Elizabeth the cook was desired to see that they were included in the bill of fareⁿ. They were eaten, although not in much esteem, as late as

^m MS. Harl. 4,016, fol. 1. a.

ⁿ Ibid. 123, fol. 160. b.

the reign of Charles II., and even in the seventeenth century were sold in the market at Tunbridge.

Our ancestors in their rigid observance of Friday sustained no very serious penance ; for so Friday Cheer. great was the variety in the fish-markets of England, that a bill of fish fare presented no insignificant appearance : besides, there was more than usual merit in devising a dainty dish of fish, and the lovers of good cheer approvingly patronized those cunning cooks who added to the relish of a fish dinner without violating its canonical limits. A lamprey pie or a herring pasty, seasoned “royally,” had peculiar charms on a fast-day. Strange condiments were sometimes blended to produce a palatable novelty ; and if not tempting to modern taste, we must admit that a mediæval fish-dinner displayed much culinary ingenuity and science.

To insure a supply of fish, stew-ponds were attached to the manors, and few monasteries were without them ; the moat around the castle was often converted into a fish-pond, and well stored with luce, carp, or tench. Of all fish, herrings were in most request, Herrings. being relished by all classes, and not only forming a standing dish for the high board of a countess, but consumed enormously at the side tables, and by the domestics at the board’s end. The salted herrings of Yarmouth were in high repute in the twelfth century : by an ancient charter the Corporation of Yarmouth were bound to send one hundred herrings baked in four-and-twenty pasties annually to the king°. Salmon, which the fair Juliana of Sopwell calls the most “stately ffyssh that ony man may angle to in freshe

° Blount, Ancient Tenures.

water," was always esteemed a royal dish; it was generally salted, being difficult to keep, and sometimes "powdered," which may mean pickled. Among the small fry, the eel, elver, and lamprey were most esteemed. Elvers were in size similar to whitebait, and were caught in hand-nets along the Severn; they were considered a dainty dish for the high table. Gloucester was long famous for lampreys, but the Norman epicures fancied that those of Nantes had a richer flavour. This fish was scarce in the reign of King John, and the Countess of Blois could not find any in England of a flavour to suit her delicate appetite. The King, to oblige her, issued a license to one Sampson, to go to Nantes to purchase some for her ladyship's use. In 1231 a ship freighted with lampreys for the table of Henry III. left Nantes, and was wrecked off the Isle of Wight; the news was conveyed to the King, who despatched a notice to the sheriff to compel all who found any of these coveted lampreys to immediately surrender them to his Majesty's use^p. As late as the time of Queen Elizabeth, Lord Berkeley used to send lamprey-pies as presents to the judges and other distinguished persons^q. Among the Friday dainties may be classed the luce, a favourite fish with Edward I. He kept a store of them in a stew-pond at Langley^r, and had them sent up from the country "in bread", to keep them fresh,—a common way of preserving fish in those days of tardy communication. Not that fish-eaters were always very delicate about that, if we are to credit Peter of Blois, who grumbles, in one of his

^p Close Rolls, 15 Hen. III., m. 16.
Family, p. 187.

^q Fosbrooke's Berkeley

^r Wardrobe Accounts, Edw. I.

chatty epistles, that the fish served up at the table of Henry Beauclerc was four days old; yet, says he, its high flavour does not lessen its esteem; and as for the cooks, they care not whether the unlucky guests are sick or not^s.

Taste, indeed, was more capricious than refined, and the epicure exulting over strong flavours, included coëtacea among his Friday fare. The whale was eaten by the Saxons, and when men were lucky enough to get it, it appeared at table late in the fifteenth century. In 1246 Henry III. directed the sheriffs of London to purchase one hundred pieces of whale for his table^t. Whales found on the coast were the perquisites of royalty; they were cut up and sent to the king's kitchen in carts. Edward II. gave a reward of twenty shillings to three mariners who had caught a whale near London bridge^u. Those found on the banks of the Thames were claimed by the Lord Mayor, and added to the luxury of the civic feast. Pieces of whale were often purchased in the thirteenth century for the table of the Countess of Leicester^x. England was supplied with this choice dainty by the fishermen of Normandy, who made it an important article of commerce. The Normans had various ways of cooking it; sometimes it was roasted, and brought to table on the spit, but the usual way was to boil it and serve it up with peas^y; epicures looked out for a slice from the tongue or the tail. The grampus, or sea-wolf, was also

Blubber
Dainties

^s Petri Blesensis, Opera, Ep. xiv.

III., m. 17.

^t Liberate Roll, 30 Hend.

^u Issue Roll, Excheq., 8 Edw. II.

^x Househol.

Manners and Expenses, p. 14.

^y Le Grand, Vie Privée, vol. ii.

pp. 83—93.

highly esteemed; but of all the blubber-dainties the porpoise was deemed the most savoury. The Saxons called it sea-swine, and the ecclesiastics of the middle ages, *porco-marino*. Porpoises were purchased for the table of Henry III. in 1246^z; and Bishop Swinfield, in the same century, dined off it whenever he had an opportunity: it was served up at a sumptuous entertainment given to Richard II. at Durham-house^a; and at the grand installation of Archbishop Neville in 1466, four porpoises were on the table. In 1491 the bailiffs of Yarmouth sent a fine porpoise as a present to Lord Oxford, whose favour they were anxious to propitiate, and accompanied it with the message, that if they had had any other “deyntes to do him a pleasir,” they would have sent them also. The worthy bailiffs could find no more savoury present in all the fish-markets of Yarmouth^b. At the marriage of Henry V. the guests were treated with a “rostit perpes,” a dish fashionable in the fifteenth century^c. We find it again in the first course at the coronation of Henry VII.^d The King was probably fond of this dish, for it was served up at his table on the feast-day of St. George^e, and my lord cardinal courted his Majesty’s favour by sending a fine porpoise to the palace^f. The cooks not only roasted and boiled it, but made it into pies and pasties; and a learned “Maister Coke” gives a receipt for a delicious “puddyng of purpasse^g,” whilst another tells us how to serve it up in fermenty;

A Dish of
Porpoise.

^z Liberate Roll, 30 Hen. III., m. 17.

^a MS. Addit., Brit. Mus.,

5,467, fol. 23. b.

^b Paston Letters, v. 404.

^c MS. Cottonian,

Julius, B. 1, fol. 57. a.

^d MS. Addit., Brit. Mus., 4,712, fol. 24. a.

^e Ibid., fol. 26. a.

^f Ibid., 7,099, fol. 48.

^g Harl. MS.,

792, fol. 14, 33.

the wheat was to be seethed in milk, in which finely-chopped almonds had been boiled to thicken it; the porpoise was to be dished up smothered in this delicate sauce^h, which was also coloured with saffronⁱ. A poet in 1452 gives directions how to carve “salte porpyesse and seele^k.” In the “Boke of Kervyng” mustard is recommended as the best sauce for porpoise, which was to be carved after the manner of venison; and the proper term to employ in asking the carver to help the guests was to bid him “undertraunche that purpos^l.” This coarse animal was esteemed as food until late in the sixteenth century; it was often on the table of Henry VIII.; and Wolsey, Somerset, and other lords of the Star Chamber, having in 1509 a snug little official dinner together, feasted sumptuously off a porpoise, which cost eight shillings^m. Even Queen Elizabeth, who was rather choice in her appetite, had porpoise among her Friday dietⁿ; and it was sold as food in the market of Newcastle as late as the year 1575^o, from which time it appears to have fallen into disrepute.

We cannot note all the fish in use in our English home; bream, carp, mulwell, sturgeon, cod, codmoppes, pikes, haddocks, and very many others made up a goodly bill of fare, over which a king or a bishop might rejoice on a day of fasting. Nothing seemed to come amiss; all were fish that came into their net; and the stronger and more highly flavoured, the greater was the relish; surfeited with delicacies, they craved a

^h MS. Addit., 5,467, fol. 59. ⁱ MS. Sloane, 1,315. ^k Ibid., fol. 10. b.

^l 4to. 1513, fol. 9. ^m MS. Lansdown, 1, fol. 119. a. ⁿ MS. Harl.,

293, fol. 159. b.

^o Brand's Newcastle, ii. 359.

novelty, from the same reason that George II., who at least lived in an age of refinement, is said to have preferred oysters stale and of strong flavour.

But whilst the tables of our ancestors were loaded with flesh, fish, and fowl, there was almost a total absence of vegetable diet: rich milk, sauces, and a potage of mixed herbs formed the side dishes; mint, parsley, and fennel was eaten with fish^p; a few vegetables, such as spinach, lettuce, onions, garlic, beans, and peas are mentioned here and there in old accounts: many of the monastic houses grew choice kale-worts and leeks, but vegetables were but little cultivated in the home gardens of the people. In the thirteenth century it was the practice to salt vegetables because they were so scarce^q. Even in the sixteenth century the commonest vegetables were imported, and a cabbage from Holland was deemed an acceptable present^r. Hull drove a thriving trade in cabbages and onions. In 1595 a sum equal to twenty shillings was paid for six cabbages and a few carrots at that port by the purveyor to the Clifford family; the onions were dried and sold in ropes^s.

But the brilliancy of a mediæval feast was chiefly due to the ingenuity of the waferers, or confectioners, who on great occasions came over from Italy and France,—countries celebrated for their *artistes* in painted sugars. Notices of the ‘subtilities,’ as the ornamental dishes were called, are curious; and from the ingenuity displayed in their construction, and the ex-

^p MS. Sloane, 4, p. 163.

Swinfield, p. 34.

^s Whitaker’s Craven, p. 321.

^q Household Roll of Bishop

^r Fox’s Life of James II., p. 205.

pense lavished upon them, they were thought deserving of minute description by the chroniclers of the time. Not only compliments, but even sly rebukes to heretics and politicians were conveyed in these sugared emblems. At an entertainment given to Richard II., the tables were crowded with subtilties; perhaps the most remarkable was a figure of St. Andrew sitting on a high altar of state, before whom the Bishop of Durham was represented as kneeling in his pontificals, and his "croser kneelyng behind him coped^t." At the marriage-feast of Henry V. and Queen Catherine, the table was also adorned with subtilties so magnificent, as not only to excite the admiration of the company, but also the astonishment of contemporary historians, who dilate with much satisfaction in a description of these festive wonders. There were pelicans and nests of birds, panthers in carriages, St. Catherine disputing with the heathen clerks, and other subtilties, each bearing some inscription implying a compliment to the royal bride^u. At the coronation of Henry VI. the designs of the waferers surpassed all that had been seen before: warriors and knights, castles and towers, rose on the royal board like a fairy scene; pieces of poetry were inscribed on armorial shields, which, if not remarkable for their cadence, were less simple in their meaning than sweetmeat-mottoes generally are. Those wicked Lollards had been spreading fast of late, some had been burnt on Tower-hill, and one, a woolpacker, had just been executed, who "was of so large a consciens that he wolde eten fleysh on Fridays^v." To a

^t MS. Harl., 4,016, fol. 1. b.
fol. 56, 57.

^u MS. Cottonian, Julius, B.

^v Chronicle of Lond., p. 118.

sect so profane in their diet, it was as well to give a warning at this grand assembly, amongst whom, peradventure, lurked many a secret Lollard; and a “subtilty” was prepared “of the emperor and the kynge that ded is, armed, and their mantels of garters, and the king that now is, kneeling before them with this reason:—

“Ayeinst miscreants the emperor Sigismond
Hath shewid his myghte, which is Imperial;
Sithen Henry V. so noble a knyght was founde
For Christ’s cause in actis martial.
Cherisshyng the chirch, Lollardes had a falle,
To give example to kynges that suitede ^z, &c.”

The origin of
the Banquet.

The cunning of the waferer was still more in request at the banquet,—a domestic entertainment which seems to unite the middle ages with the Tudor period. When the banquet was first introduced is doubtful; it may, perhaps, be regarded as an expansion of a custom observed at the termination of the mediæval feast. When the gold and silver cans^y, full of the rich wines of Guienne and Languedoc, were brought into the hall, spices were handed round on plates of gold or silver. We read in Froissart that the Earl of Harcourt “served the king of his spice plate^z,” and in a manuscript in the British Museum we have a description of the etiquette to be observed in this

The Spice-
plate.

ceremonial^a. Spice-plates are noticed in our earliest inventories, and like other articles of table garniture, were often richly embellished by art. Among the jewels of Edward II. was a spice-plate

^z MS. Cotton., Jul., B. 1, fol. 79. b.

^y Froissart, iii. 135.

^z Ibid., ii. 164.

^a MS. Additional, 4,712, fol. 2, 3.

“enamelled with baboons^b.” Piers Gaveston had plates of silver “por espicerie,” fruit trenchers enamelled with arms, and, as we have before said, forks of silver for eating pears^c. Edward III. had spice-plates enamelled with the royal arms in the centre^d, and a very handsome one among his jewels, “enamelled with hunting scenes^e.” But one still more beautiful, belonging to Henry VI., is described as a great spice-plate of gold with a cover, at the top of which was an eagle, with a gem pendant in his mouth, and all round the same was encrusted with costly gems^f.

With the spice were also handed round the drageoirs, or comfit-boxes, full of perfumed The Drageoir,
or Comfit-box. sugared dainties to sweeten the breath: on visits of ceremony, especially among the ladies, the drageoirs were placed on the buffet. Examples of these choice and elaborately worked little boxes are found in the cabinets of the curious; they are usually divided into compartments like a modern spice-box, and of similar shape, but beautifully filigreed with gold and silver. According to the punctilious etiquette of the chivalrous age, the number of confection-boxes on the buffet of my lady denoted her rank and estate. A duchess might display two of silver, but on the buffet of a queen were placed three drageoirs of gold^g. This feast of honied wine and sweets was the origin of the banquet, and many little mysteries and *bon-mots* were connected with the sugared dainties, which added much to the pleasure of the entertainment. A writer

^b Ancient Kalend. and Invent., iii. 133.

^c *Fœdera*, iii. 391.

^d MS. Cotton., Nero, C. viii. 319.

^e *Archæologia*, vol. x. p. 247.

^f Ancient Kalend. and Invent., ii. 223.

^g *De Palaye*, ii. 222.

of the fifteenth century, who says that the table ought to be with "carraway and comfite sette," speaks also of

"Chard juicys and sugar, for axynge of questions ^h,"—

so that our sugared coquetteries are but a mediæval way of kissing and making love, after all.

A passage behind the screen in the hall led to the kitchen and minor offices, some account of which will further illustrate the home life of the middle ages. This passage was often a mere temporary erection, and

The Kitchen
of the Olden
Time. conducted to buildings almost as temporary; so that in times of war or civil commotion they were too unimportant to cause much anxiety for their safety, and sometimes, indeed, they were constructed as the owner came, and pulled down as he left one manor for another. As the times grew more settled and the comforts of home more respected, and the baron led a less migratory life, the kitchen, the pantry, and the buttery were regarded as important offices in the mansion, and built in closer proximity to the great hall. A fine painting in one of the royal manuscripts in the British Museum represents the kitchen as merely separated from the hall by a serving-board or hatch, through which the master-cook is passing the dishes to the attendantsⁱ. The kitchen at Raby Castle is an interesting example of the fourteenth century. Several kitchens were frequently found requisite to supply the bounteous feasting in the hall. At Bolton Castle, in Yorkshire, there are two kitchens remaining. In some, the ground-floor of a tower was appropriated to this

^h MS. Sloane, Brit. Mus., 1,315, fol. 3.

ⁱ MS. Reg., 14, E. iv., fol. ccxxxv.

office, and in others it occupied one side of the castle yard^k. The interior of a kitchen in the olden time was a glorious sight to behold; with its wide and capacious hearth, and bright array of caldrons and seething pots, it gave ample promise of the festivities of the hall. Various, however, were the uses to which the kitchen was applied; its enormous fire served as a smithy when occasion required, and the wheels of my lady's whirlicot or the franklin's plough were repaired in the kitchen.

Although wood was burned almost without exception in the hall and chambers, coal was found Introduction of Coal into Domestic use. more economical in the kitchen, especially in large towns. Prejudice retarded the introduction of this useful mineral into domestic use, but as chimneys became more general, the trade in this article increased. The earliest mention of coal is said to be in 1245, but it was probably known for the purposes of trade long before: the citizens of London used it in the reign of Edward the First; every ship load that passed under the arches of old London bridge paid a toll of sixpence to the Corporation^l. From a document which throws much light upon the domestic condition of the people in the thirteenth century, we find that many tradesmen of Colchester used sea coal as early as 1296^m. The middle classes were the first to appreciate its value; but the nobility, whose mansions were in the pleasant suburbs of Holborn and the Strand, regarded it as a nuisance, and complained loudly of the smoke. In 1306 a commission of inquiry was instituted, and fol-

^k Domestic Architecture, ii. 119.
Scacca, p. 480.

^m Rot. Parl., i. 228.

^l Hearne's Liber Niger

lowed by a proclamation forbidding the use of sea coal within the city of London; it is said that one man was actually executed for the breach of this royal mandateⁿ. The effect of this prohibitory measure was but temporary; fifty pounds were paid from the exchequer in 1308 to several "wood-merchants" for providing coal and wood for the coronation of Edward the Second^o. The price of coal in the reign of Edward III. was six shillings and fourpence a chaldron; one hundred chaldrons were at one time provided at that rate for the royal household^p; the coal trade of Newcastle was then of considerable importance^q. In the old romance of "William and the Werwolf," written in the fourteenth century, we have the following allusion to colliers:—

"And erliche on the morow, er the sunne gan shine,
Choliers, that caryreden col, come ther bisyde^r."

In the same romance we have many passages which shew that the kitchens were used for various purposes. It is stated that there were always men in the kitchen to slay the beasts, and butchers to flay and dress the carcasses. Melior, the heroine, dressed herself as a kitchen lad, and stole some of the skins for her disguise^s. The furniture of the domestic offices was of the rudest description, being made by the servants of the household; but the kitchen utensils were regarded as

Butchers of
the Kitchen.

Kitchen Fur-
niture.

ⁿ Quarterly Review, xcxi. 148.

^o Issue Roll, Exchequer, 1 Ed. II.

^p Ibid., 38 Ed. III. m.

^q The burgesses of Newcastle were first licensed to dig for coal by license of Henry III., in 1284. See Dr. Anderson's Course of Creation.

^r Printed by the Roxburghe Club, fol. 37.

^s Ibid., fol. 24.

valuable property, and carried in the chariots as part of the "running wardrobe" of my lord, as he visited his various manors. Carts were hired to "carry the kitchen," when Edward I. went from Langley to his manor at Isenhamsted^t. Particular care appears to have been taken of these utensils; and an iron pot or an old gridiron was often recorded, even in the wills of nobles, with ludicrous solemnity. Both Isabella, ^{The Royal Pots and Kettles.} the daughter of King John, and Joanna, the daughter of Edward III., had each of them certain pots, pans, gridirons, and similar household stuff allowed them from the royal wardrobes on their marriages. The pots, spits, and frying-pans of Edward III. were classed among his Majesty's jewels. This, where the material of which they were made is not specified, might be accounted for from the fact that such articles were often made of silver for the cooking of lampreys and other dainty fry; but those among the jewels of Edward III. are particularly described as of iron. In the inventory of the wardrobe of Henry V., the utensils of the royal kitchens are carefully described^u. The spits, or "broches," were more frequently of silver, because it was the custom to take them to table with the joint or fowl which had been cooked upon them. Those among the domestics who were too old or too young for more important service, were employed to turn the broche, and, as Aubrey says, "did lick the dripping for their pains." Lydgate thus describes the turnspit:—

"His mouth wel wet, his sleeves right thredbare,
A turnbroche, a boy for hagge of ware,
With louring face noddynge and slumberyng^x."

^t Archæol., xv. 355.^u Rot. Parl., iv. 242.^x Harl., 2,251.

This, of all domestic offices, was deemed the most menial ; yet, by an old feudal tenure, Sir John Compes, in the reign of Edward III., held the manor of Finchingsfield by service of turning the spit at his Majesty's coronation^y, no very congenial employment, one would think, for a knight in the gallant days of chivalry. It was usual for the guests to bestow a largess upon those who turned the broche ; thus Lord Howard gave a penny each to four old men who performed that duty^z, and when Mary Tudor dined at Havering, she gave the turnbroches sixteen-pence^a.

Among the officers of the kitchen, the master-cook, The Master-Cook. *magister coquorum*, was a mighty man. In early times he was often a person of rank and wealth. The brother of Cardinal Otho filled that office in his highness's household^b. The cook was treated with the respect due to his artistic skill, and he often won, by his grateful science, the condescension and favour of his master, who failed not to reward him with ample privileges and becoming authority. On state occasions he sometimes joined the procession into the hall, and claimed the honour of carrying the first dish to table ; he had the warmest seat in the chimney corner of the kitchen, and, as a mark of his rank, he carried a large wooden spoon, for the double purpose of tasting the soups and chastising those who failed to obey orders. He had a whole troop of underlings at his command ; knaves of the kitchen who scraped the fish and plucked the fowl ; clouts to wash the dishes and platters ; and scullions to scour the pots and ket-

^y Blount's Tenures, p. 191.

^z Howard's Household Book, p. 461.

^a MS. Reg., 17, B. 28, fol. 79.

^b Mat. Paris.

ties; over whom he ruled as absolutely as an eastern monarch over his slaves.

The oven was generally in the kitchen, but in large establishments the bakehouse was often a separate building, and removed as far as possible from the hall, to obviate the danger arising from fire; it was so in the monasteries, and the arrangements of domestic buildings were copied from the monastic. This calls to mind an anecdote of the twelfth century. The Abbot of Peterborough, going one morning into his kitchen, found the monks busy mending the tables, which they were doing so slovenly, that my lord abbot “fell a cursing,” and went away in a towering passion to hold a court at Castor. Soon after he was gone, one of the monks went into the bakehouse to light the fire; the wood was damp and would not burn, so, following the example of his superior, he, too, began swearing, and exclaimed, “The devil take the fire!” The devil, says the old chronicler, took him at his word; the flames, bursting out furiously, ran up the tower, caught the roof, and for nine whole days, to use a common expression, played “Old Nick” with Peterborough monastery^c.

The domestic baker prepared several kinds and qualities of bread, suitable to the various departments of the household; the manchet loaf of wheaten flour was for the master’s table, the fine chete for the side tables, and the brown bread for the board’s end. The finer quality was made of flour passed through a sieve or boulding cloth, and sometimes called boulded bread; the chete was of unboulded flour,

*An Anecdote
of Monastic
Life.*

*The Baker
and his Batch
of Bread.*

^c Stevens’s Continuation to Dugdale, vol. i. p. 474.

and the household was made of a mixture of flour and rye-meal, called mystelon, or maslin; the latter was the quality usually made in the houses of the middle class; the poor ate bread made of rye, lentils, and oatmeal. The baker was expected to make a certain number of loaves from a bushel of wheat:—

“Of a Lunden buschell he shall bake,
xx. louys I undertake ^d.”

Fancy bread, such as paynepuff and marchpane, was prepared for company; the latter was in old times a favourite delicacy, made of flour, sugar, and almonds; originally, it was used especially at Easter, and called masspane, or mass-bread, and sometimes payne-mayne. We read in a romance that Myldore the Bryzth, when she entertained Sir Degrevant,—

“Payne-mayn prevayly,
Sche brought from the pantry ^e.”

The pantry, called by ancient housekeepers the covey, was in charge of the panter, or paneter, to whom the bread was delivered as it came from the bakehouse. He kept the loaves in huge “arks^f,” or chests; and it was his duty to serve out the portions and “liveries,” allowed to the various members of the household; to ascertain that it was properly leavened and baked; and, as large quantities of bread were consumed for feeding the horses and dogs, he gave to the aveynor the

^d MS. Sloane, 1,986, p. 39.

^e Thornton Romances, p. 235.

^f In 1341 Thomas Harpham left to his daughter an “ark” that belonged to her mother.—(*Test. Ebor.*, p. 3.) In an inventory dated 1559 we find an “ark for bread.”—(*Wills and Invent. publ. by Surtees Society*, vol. iii. p. 135.) The term is still used in the north of England to signify a large chest.

coarse lentil bread baked for that purpose. It was also his duty to cut up the loaves for the table with artistic skill. This was a nice point in mediæval etiquette; the loaf was to be divided into a number of pieces, and then put together again as if they were still united; it was only the vulgar who bit their bread; it was all very excusable in the rustics, but, says an old writer, it—

“Is no curtesye to use in town^g!”

Situated far away from the marts of commerce as many of the castles and manor-houses were, ^{The Butler and the Buttery.} and often dependent upon the country fair for supplies, few opportunities were allowed to escape of purchasing stores for the buttery, which in most of the ancient mansions was an office proportionately large and convenient. It was under the care of the butler, who acted as general purveyor to the family, and who from the buttery-hatch dispensed the stores to the cook, and gave out the rations or liveries of meat, wine, and beer allowed to the various officers of the household. The buttery was furnished with “turrys,” and wine “cannels” of box:—

“A gymlet scharpe, a fawcet to put in,
And tappus therto redy to stoppe the pepyn^h.”

The wine was kept either in the buttery, or in a cellar beneath the hall. The foreign wines chiefly came from Guienne, or from the vineyards of Anjou, Aucerne, and Poitou; but a great proportion, although bearing foreign names, were manufactured by the butler.

^g Curious directions for cutting bread at table will be found in MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 8.

^h MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 3. a.

The verjuice of the English grape was boiled in an abundance of honey and spice, and being made for immediate consumption, was seldom left to undergo the process of fermentation; it was rarely the cellar was stocked with wine of an old vintage. The butler was directed to—

*The Wines in
old Cellars.*

“Take hede of thy wynys, redde, whyte, and swete,
Loke at nyght with a condel they reboyle not ne breke !”

He was also every night to wash the pipe-head with cold water, and was to be careful, if he heard the wine “reboyl” or hiss, to change the vessels; among the appliances of his office were perches on which hung bags of boulting-cloth to filter the wine and separate it from the spice and dregs, and earthen vessels for placing underneath to receive the liquor. Bottles of glass were an introduction of the fifteenth century, before which period the wine was kept in barrels, or in jars, pitchers, or pottles of earthenware, over which bladders were tied to exclude the air^k. The wine was carried into the hall in silver cans, jaloners, or pottles, some of which, in the homes of wealth, were adorned with much artistic beauty.

In the pretty language of romance, an old poet gives us the following catalogue of mediæval wines:—

“Ye shal have rumney and malmesyne,
Both ypocrasse and vernage wyne,
Mountrose and wine of Greke,
Both algrade and respice eke,

ⁱ MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 4. a.

^k MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 5. a. Bottles of leather were long used: we find them “painted and gilt” among the household stuff of Henry VIII. MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 147.

Antioche and bastarde,
Pyment also, and garnarde.
Wyne of Greke and Muscadell,
Both clare, pyment, and Rochell¹."

Taking this verse as our text, a few notes on these wines may be interesting. The 'Romney moden' was imported from Hungary; it was a table wine, and considered by the leeches a good auxiliary to digestion. The 'malmesyne,' or malmsey, took its name from Napoli di Malvasia in the Morea. But the 'Ipocrase' was the favourite of all the home-made wines; it was hotly infused with spice, and drank after every meal at the tables of the wealthy; it was also served in the bed-chamber the last thing at night^m. We have several receipts for making it; a whole pipe was provided for the feast at the installation of Archbishop Nevil in 1466ⁿ. It was drunk at Court in the time of Henry VIII., and was in use at St. John's College, Cambridge, in the last century, where it was brought in at the Christmas festivities^o. 'Vernage' was a white and sweet wine:—

"A thought so swete in my corage,
That never piment ne vernage,
Was halfe so swete for to drynke."

'Mountrose' was the red wine of Gascony, which was deemed a liquor for a lord. 'Algrade' was imported from Crete; and 'Antioch' was the juice of the luscious grape growing on the sunny banks of the Orontes; it was said to contain many rare and valuable properties. The 'bastarde' was a table beverage, and was a name

¹ Squire of Lowe Degre, l. 753.

^m Horda Anglia, iii. 74.

ⁿ Forme of Cury, pp. 86, 161.

^o MS. Additional, 7,099, fol. 139.

applied to any mixed or sweetened wine, as 'piment' was to all wines that were spiced:—

"The knyght and she to chamber wente,
With pimente and with spicery^p."

'Clare' was a kind of claret, and, like the 'Rochell,' was imported from France. The names of mediæval wines are legion, and the same description of wine received various designations, to indicate the particular province whence it came. Harrison, at a later period, says that of the small wines there are about fifty-six sorts, which are named after the places in which they are made; besides these, he adds, there are thirty kinds of Italian, Spanish, and other choicer wines^q. The 'Caprike,' or Greek wine, was sometimes called "torrenty of Hebrew," and the white wine, "the wine of Ossey." Little importance was attached to the quality of the wine, so long as the spice was strong and aromatic.

The domestic consumption of spice was enormous; it had been from the very earliest ages a Spice and the
Spicery. coveted luxury with our forefathers. In the old Saxon times it was a treasure equal to gold. The coffer of Bede the Venerable contained nothing so valuable in the eyes of the monks as the little parcel of spice which, just before his death, he divided amongst them with affectionate love. Boniface sent as a present to Abbess Eadburge some cinnamon, frankincense, and a silver pen^r. Early travellers and monkish ambassadors to foreign courts, brought on their return spice and fine linen as the most appropriate presents

^p Syr Bevis, 819, sign. M. iii., published by the Maitland Club.

^q Description of Britain, p. 167. ^r Epistolæ S. Bonifaci ed. Mogunt., 1629, Ep. vii. p. 11.

to their superiors. Such offerings were sanctioned by holy usage, and revered for their religious associations. Previous to the twelfth century, spice was only used at table on extraordinary occasions; but in the succeeding age, the marriage of Edward the First with Eleanor of Castile led to a more liberal commerce with the Spaniards, who, through the Venetians, traded largely in the produce of the East. The opportunity afforded by that event was cultivated by the enterprising merchants of the day, and the taste for these aromatic luxuries led to a commerce which soon became extensive and lucrative. Every dish on the baron's table was flavoured with spice^s; the wine and ale were infused with its pungent properties; cinnamon and grains of paradise were handed round on salvers of gold and silver, and no entertainment was deemed complete without an abundance of these Eastern products. The arrival of a vessel freighted with spice was an event of importance, and the king sometimes interdicted the sale of the precious cargo until his épicier had first replenished the royal spicery^t. Much of such cargoes consisted of sugar, which was included among spices, and sold by the spice merchants, who were the grocers of the period. The Crusades were the means of introducing this article into Europe, before which honey was the general sweetener. We find that sugar was sold in England both in loaves and by the pound during the thirteenth century, and that it could be procured even in the remote towns of Ross and Hereford^u. Henry III., in

Introduction
of Sugar.

^s The cook had a coffer with kitchen spices under his care. Household Roll of Bp. Swinfield, vol. i. p. 33.

^t Claus. Rot., 10.

Hen. III., m. 3.

^u Household Roll, Bp. Swinfield, p. 116.

1256, ordered the sheriffs of London to send him "four loaves of sugar" to Woodstock^v. The sugar of Beza was the kind most commonly in use; that from the marts of Cyprus and Alexandria was in higher esteem, but sometimes difficult to obtain. Henry III., in 1226, requested the mayor of Winchester to procure him three pounds of the sugar of Alexandria, if he could find so much among the merchants of the city; he was also to purchase some rose and violet coloured sugars for his Majesty's use^w. The price at which sugar was sold placed it beyond the reach of the middle class; that of an ordinary quality was retailed up to the close of the fifteenth century, at from one and sixpence to three shillings a pound, or, on an average, to a sum equivalent to about thirty shillings at present^x. The consumption of honey was therefore great, and in the time of Edward III. honey-refining had become an important branch of industry^y.

It was a principle which feudalism encouraged, that every home should be self-dependent; many comforts were foregone because none of the domestics possessed the knowledge to create them. The insecurity of the times, and the isolation of the baronial mansion, made it almost imperative, that tailors, carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, and indeed mechanics of every branch of industry, should be retained within the castle walls. In large households, these had each their appropriate duty, but in smaller families Jock was expected to possess a smattering of

Home Trades
and Domestic
Duties.

^v Claus. Rot., 40 Hen. III., 3, m. 6.

^w Lib. Rot., 10 Hen. III., m. 3. See Household Manners and Expenses, p. 71.

^x Additional Roll in Brit. Mus., 5,962.

^y Barnes' Hist., Edw. III.

all trades; he had to repair his own buskins, mend the tables, and groom my lady's chamber. In the royal household the number of domestics was infinite; labour was cheap, and could be had for the feeding, and an officer was appointed for the performance of every duty, however trifling. It took eight sturdy knaves to make the bed, and four beef-eating squires were retained to lay the cloth. Even in the homes of the nobility, that at which a chamber-maid would be ashamed to grumble, was divided among a dozen domestics. Vanity found a pleasure in swelling this lazy retinue, and the pride of wealth was gratified by the bustle and pomp thus created in domestic life. Among the early Normans the domestics were the poor conquered Saxons; the familiar names of Joe, Jock, and Jill bespeak their origin. They were often treated with barbarous cruelty, and the lash was sometimes applied without mercy; this is evident not only from the casual allusions of contemporary writers, but also from the paintings in old manuscripts. The higher officers of the household were Normans, and they are often represented as insolent and rapacious, and as marring the hospitality of their superior by extorting a largess from every guest. Peter of Blois² complains that he could not move in the court, could neither eat nor drink, obtain accommodation, nor gain respect, without continually seeing these "thievish knaves," who, however, took care of their own comforts, and grew lusty upon the fat things of the buttery, washed down with copious libations of "*potent ale*," *Potent Ale.* the consumption of which, in all large establishments,

² Pet. Blesensis Opera, 4to., Mogunt. 1600, Ep. xiv.

was enormous. It was usually home-brewed, except that drunk in the homes of the citizens; the breweries of London were famous even in the reign of Henry III., and statutes regulating the price of beer were enacted in his time. Beer was brewed from all kinds of grain; oats were as frequently used as barley or wheat. The monks of Glastonbury record with gratitude the munificence of Abbot William, who added half a load of oats to each brewing, to increase the strength of the conventual beer^a. The French brewed from vetches, lentils, rye, and darnel. The art of brewing did not arrive at any degree of perfection until the fifteenth century; even at the table of royalty it was often brought so thick and so full of dregs, that the guests were obliged to filter it through their teeth^b. Hops, although known from an early date in Flanders and Belgium, were not grown in England until the fifteenth century. Kymer, in his "Dietary," speaks of beer well hopped^c; they were grown in Kent as early as the year 1464^d, although Harrison, a century later, speaks of their introduction as of recent date. Hops were not at first acceptable to the popular taste; our forefathers had long been used to a sweet, glutinous, well-spiced liquor, and they had no relish for the bitter herb. The royal brewer at Eltham was enjoined to put neither brimstone nor hops into the ale^e. The household brewing appears to have been usually undertaken by a female domestic, and where the establishment was

^a MS. Cottonian Tiberius, A. v. Stevens's Continuation to Dugdale, vol. i. p. 437.

^b Petr. Blesensis Opera, Ep. xiv.

^c A copy of the curious work of Kymer is in the British Museum, MS. Sloane, No. 4, p. 166.

^d Notes and Queries, Second

Series, vol. ii. p. 277.

^e Arch., iii. 157.

of a more limited extent, the periodical assistance of the professed bruyfe, or brewster, was called in.

Among the home manufactures of the age was that of candles and torches. A distinct office called the Chaundry was set apart for this purpose, ^{The Chaundry and the Chaundeler.} which was under the care of the chaundeler, who also took charge of the candlesticks, lamps, prickets, and snuffers. He—

“Torches and tortes and prikeles could make,
Perchours, smale condel I undertake ^f.”

Indeed, in large houses he had plenty to do. Candle-making was a very different affair in the fifteenth century to what it was in the old Saxon time, when the housewife was content with a mere lump of fat with a wick in the middle, and which was stuck upon a piece of pointed wood called a condel-stick, a term which continued to be applied to the candle holder even when made of silver or brass. When branched so as to hold more than one light, it was called a beam or tree; thus we read in old inventories of beams and trees with four or six candlesticks^g. The Normans at first seldom used lights within their homes; they supped early, and rarely protracted their revels into the night. William Rufus would not allow the use of candles within the palace, but William of Malmesbury has thought it worth recording that his brother Hen. I. restored them. When Sir Bevis—

“Yede to bed a night
With torges and with candle light;”

^f MS. Sloane, 1986, fol. 46.

^g A bem with vj. candlestykkus,—Invent., temp. 1463; New Retrospective Rev., i. p. 101. “Twooe greate standynge candlestickes of woode pillar fashon,” “Beame of woode with laten candelstukes,”—MS. Harl., 1,419, fols. 137, 368.

late hours had become more fashionable, and the art of candle-making had considerably progressed; wicks of cotton and thread were used in preference to bulrushes and reeds in the thirteenth century, and the fat underwent some process of refining. Candles so improved were hawked about the streets of Paris^h; in England they were generally manufactured at home, but the trade of a tallow-chandler is mentioned as early as the time of Edward I., in whose reign they were sold for about twopence the poundⁱ. When the hall was lit up at supper, in winter time, squires and yeomen of the chamber stood behind the benches with torches, which being commonly made of rope steeped in pitch, tallow, oil, and rosin, not only threw a lurid glare over the table, but mingled with the savoury fumes from the dishes, an odour far less agreeable to the guests. When Count Gaston de Foix supped, twelve servants bore each a lighted torch, which they held near his table, and which gave a brilliant light to the hall^j. The yeoman of the crown held the torches in the hall of Henry VII., but when the King went to the lavatory before and after supper, he was attended by the squires, who claimed the honour of holding the torches until his Majesty had washed and again returned into the hall, when they were given to the yeoman^k. Sometimes we read of—

“Torches maad of wax ful clere^l;”

but these were for grand occasions. On the pillars and between the windows “sizes” were stuck on prickets,

^h Le Grand, iii. 176.
Edw. I. See Issue Rolls, p. 113.

ⁱ Ninepence were paid for 4 lb. for

^j Froissart, iii. cap. cxxxi.

^k MS. Harl., 305, fol. 6. a.

^l Rich. Cœur de Lion, l. 2,648.

and the groom or porter of the hall had a ladder so that he might hang them up high above the arras^m. But in addition to these lights in the hall, the supper-table was often adorned with candelabra, some of which displayed much beauty in their manufacture. In the British Museum is a candlestick of the thirteenth century, enriched with Champlevé enamel. In the Romance of Guigamar a chamber is described as lit with two elegant candelabra of pure goldⁿ; such are frequently mentioned in the inventories of the middle ages, with here and there a brief notice of their design. Among the jewels of Edward II. were three candelabra in the shape of lions^o. In the illuminated paintings with which old manuscripts are adorned they are often depicted as upon the table, and prove by their beauty how much art loved to embellish such articles of domestic use. In these rich and costly candlesticks a fine wax, called Paris wax, or "Candle Paris," was burnt:—

"In halle at soper schalle condels brenne,
Of Parys therin that all men kenne^p."

These choice French candles were in use as early as the reign of Edward I.^q In addition to these articles, quarions and morters were delivered from the chaundry bar for burning in the chambers at night; the former were square lumps of wax with a wick in the centre, the latter were round like a modern night-light. All

^m MS. Harl., 305, fol. 6. a.

ⁿ MS. Harl., 978, fol. 117. b.

^o Ancient Kalenders and Inventories, iii. 134. A bronze candelabrum in form of an elephant with turrets, of the thirteenth century, is represented in the Arch. Journal, viii. 206.

^p MS. Sloane, 1,986, p. 46.

^q Liber Garderobæ, p. 137. "William Whyte taloughchaundler for iii dozen ix lb. paris candell for to light when the kinges highness and goode grace on a nyght cam into hys grete wardrobe."—MS. Harl., fol. 20. a.

the fragments of the torches and candles were to be returned to the chaundeler, and in some instances were the perquisites of his office. By the ancient laws of Wales, the candle-bearer was allowed a piece as long as the breadth of his hand of every one that he held; he was entitled to all the fragments, and enjoyed the delectable privilege of claiming all the tops of the candles on condition that he bit them off^r.

Those who have scanned the catalogues of costly
The Laundry. raiment that crowded the wardrobes of the rich, cannot fail to have been surprised at the few items in household books indicative of personal cleanliness. Washing days had not, during the middle ages, the terrors they have now. The dyer covered a vast deal that the laundress would now extract, and his trade ranked high among the ancient guilds. The rich taffeta, the velvets, and Tartaren silks, were often worn without a shred of under-clothing, as were also the coarse woollen garments by the domestics. A clean shirt was a luxury, and, indeed, the possession of a shirt of "reynes-clothe" or white linen was indicative of great personal splendour; even the wardrobes of nobles were deemed unusually rich if they included a few linen shirts. It was seldom that either sex wore shirts or nightgowns in bed, it being long the custom to sleep entirely naked. It is true the head was sometimes bandaged up like a mummy, or primly dressed out with a couvre-chef and ornamental gear; but this was only when guests were expected in the chamber. Even at a later period, when my lady occasionally indulged in a nightgown,

^r Ancient Laws of Wales, p. 20.

it was probably a robe of silk or velvet. The nightdress of Anne Boleyn was made of black satin, bound with black taffeta and edged with black velvet^s. The winter nightgown of Queen Elizabeth was also of black velvet, wrought with passanet lace of murry silk and gold. and lined with fur; on one occasion, in 1568, her Majesty orders her trusty and well-beloved George Bradymann, to deliver "three score and six of the best sable skynnes, to furnish us a nightgowne^t!" The curious may perhaps be amused with the purport of another warrant, given under the sign-manual of the Queen, by virtue of which, in 1572, she orders the delivery from her wardrobe of twelve yards of purple velvet, "frized on the backe syde with white and russet sylk" for a royal nightgown, and in the same warrant very singularly directs the delivery of fourteen yards of murry damask, for the "making of a nyghtgowne for the Erle of Leycester^u!"

A taste for personal cleanliness was but slowly acquired, but it is more observable in the fifteenth century than in any preceding period. We read that Lord Howard had four shirts made on one occasion, and gave the seamstress sixpence for her labour; and an old writer in his advice to servants directs the officer of the bed-chamber to take his master's shirt, and

"Warm hit be the fire if the wedder be frysse^x."

Another, writing on etiquette, says,—

"The lord schall shyft his gowne at nyghte^y."

A shirt, too, was purchased for Master Howard when he

^s Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VIII., p. 223.
ditional in Brit. Mus., 5,751, fol. 79.

^t MS. Ad-

^u Ibid., fol. 87.

^x MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 14. a.

^y MS. Sloane, 1,896, p. 34.

went to college, but he does not appear to have been supplied with a change of linen. It is evident that up to that time, which was late in the fifteenth century, shirts were not for everyday use, or if they were, they must have been in a delightful condition when they reached the washing-tub; yet a shirt cost but twelve pence, equal to about as many shillings now. The tally of the laundress was short but profitable; she received a penny, and sometimes twopence, for washing the master's shirt, which was a day's wages at that time^z. The table and chamber linen being as limited as the personal, the laundress had not a very laborious office; she was allowed two standards, one to contain the clean linen, the other the soiled: more ample accommodation was not found necessary even in the luxurious palace of Henry VIII. The laundress was especially directed to procure as much "sweet powder, sweet herbs, and other sweet things," as should be requisite for the "sweet keeping" of the royal linen. This was perhaps more necessary from the practice common in early times of extracting the dirt by smearing the clothes with mud, or scouring them with dung, which, says Harrison, gave them such a savour that "I cannot abide to weare them on my bodie." The women with their clothes tucked up danced upon the linen, and the tubs were large enough for several to do this at once. As lie was used instead of soap, the cost of washing was not great when performed at home: we must not therefore always infer a proportionate inattention to cleanliness from the small amount expended in this branch

^z MS. Harl., 4,780, which contains many curious items relative to the washing, drying, and dying of linen, &c.

of domestic economy. The washing bills for a bishop and his numerous household for an entire year in the thirteenth century amounted to forty-three shillings and twopence^a, whilst the cost of the laundry in a ducal establishment in the time of Henry VIII., consisting of one hundred and seventy persons, was but forty shillings for a whole year^b.

In addition to the offices we have mentioned, there were many others in the baronial mansion, which it would be tedious to describe with minuteness. There was the larder, and the saltery in which the meats were cured, the ewery in which the lavers and towels were kept, the saucery for the cups and platters, the squillary, or scullery, in which they washed the dishes and scraped the trenchers, a drudgery performed by the "trencher-knaves;" there was also the garderobe for the robes and linen of the baron, the peltry for his furs, the pitcher-house for the earthen cups and pans, and the fuel-house for the wood and coal.

It is evident that during the early period of the middle ages the sleeping accommodations were extremely meagre. The hall was often the principal dormitory; and as the beds were mere bags of straw, which were emptied in the morning, and re-filled with fresh litter at night, they were easily removed. In the time of King John, the nobles who waited upon the queen were to be honourably served, as became their estate, and to sleep at night in the hall^c. As there was ample space in this apartment, it was seldom thought necessary to construct separate

Minor Offices
in the Baronial
Mansion.

The Bed-
chamber.

^a Household Roll of Bp. Swinfield, ii. p. xxxix. ^b Northumberland Household Book.

^c Claus. Rot., 14 John, 1,212.

accommodation for the female portion of the domestics, who were few compared with the number of male retainers; it is to be feared, from the frequent hints, and sometimes the still broader allusions of the *trouvères*, that this custom led to much immorality in the household. Even when bed-chambers were constructed, they were of a most temporary character; the magnificence displayed in the baronial hall was not upheld in the more private apartments of home; the splendid pageantry of the great chamber was designed rather to impress the world with the resources and power of the feudal lord, than for the gratification of personal luxury. As the baron left the seat of cloth of gold, the storied walls, and fretted porch, he passed to an apartment little superior to a cow-shed. In the thirteenth century the sleeping chambers attached to the palaces of Henry III. were mere rough erections of timber, and separated from the great hall by a pent-house, or covered passage of the same material^d. On the marriage of Elizabeth, daughter of Edward I., boards and iron was sent to Harwich to erect chambers for the household of the Duchess of Brabant and the Earl of Holland^e.

In the days of chivalry, however, my lady's chamber possessed all that the luxury of the age could devise. Love dictated its embellishment, and enriched it with offerings of affection; and it was here that early art

^d See Extracts from *Liberate Rolls in Domestic Architecture*, vol. i.

^e MS. Additional, 7,965, fol. 15. Even as late as the time of Henry VIII. the officers of the royal household had but miserable accommodation. At the royal manor of "Oykyng" there was made "a grete long shed in the utter courte wyth viij new partycions in it for offycers to lye in."—*MS. Addit., Brit. Mus.*, 10,109, fol. 194.

displayed her decorative graces. The quaint old poets loved to describe these blissful nooks of domestic life, and often give us details, which bespeak new comforts, and a growing taste for the quiet enjoyments of home. The bower window was in itself a charming relief to the dull monotony of the grey castle walls; it usually overlooked some "pleasant pleying place," and around the lattice fair hands enticed the rose and honeysuckle. Even the Norman damsels of the twelfth century, before glass was introduced into our English home, had a taste for the beautiful, and would adorn their chamber windows by trailing flowers and vines over the lattice^f. This pleasing custom long continued; and Lydgate speaks of windows having pretty

The Window
of my Lady's
Bower.

"Vynettes runnyng in the casements."

Flower-pots as a window decoration were introduced in the fifteenth century; they were filled with herbs, and intended as much for perfuming the chamber as for ornament. Henry VII. was liberal in rewarding those who brought him gifts of potted herbs, and gave enormous sums for pots of basil and sweet-smelling thyme^g.

Glass, even when far too rare and costly for the hall, shone in the casement of my lady's bower. In 1238 the King's treasurer was ordered to provide a window of white glass, to be placed in the Queen's chamber at Winchester, "so that the chamber may not be so windy

^f Neckam, *De Naturæ Rerum*, lib. ii.

^g On one occasion he gave £4 8s. for "six pottes of thyme;" a sum perhaps equivalent to £40 at present.—(*MS. Addit., Brit. Mus.*, 7,099, fol. 25, 61, 83.)

as it used to be^h;" and in the old romance of Sir Degrevant, we read that the chamber of Myldore the Bryzt was furnished with

"Square windows of glas,
The richest that ever was,
The moynelus was of brass,
Made with mane handusⁱ."

The ladies, left much to solitude, would often embellish the cold and gloomy walls of their apartments with the graceful efforts of the needle; and from the glowing romances with which they sometimes beguiled their leisure, they gleaned many a charming episode for the embroidery with which they hid the mechanical rudeness of the chamber furniture. Eleanor, the queen of Henry III., paid much attention to the decoration of her apartments; and frequent orders were issued by the King to paint the Queen's chambers with pictures and histories. On one occasion, Eleanor borrowed of the Master of the Knights Templars a certain great book, written in French, containing the exploits of Antioch and the kings^k; and shortly afterwards, Edward, the monk of Westminster, was commanded to paint a chamber with a story of Antioch^l. The chamber walls were crowded with the heroes of romance, who delighted and solaced the fair damsels in their solitude.

The furniture of the bed-chamber was often superior
The Chamber
floor. to that of the other apartments; yet even in
the homes of kings, the chamber floor was

^h Lib. Roll, quoted in Turner's Domestic Architecture, vol. i. p. 190.

ⁱ Thornton Rom., p. 238.

^k Claus. Rot., 34 Hen. III. m. 12.

^l Claus. Rot., 35 Hen. III. m. 11.

covered, like the hall, with straw and rushes. The Normans had long been used in their own country to strew their floors with such litter. It is related by William of Malmesbury, that when William the Conqueror was born, he no sooner touched the ground than he filled his little hands with the rushes which were strewn on the floor, which the chamber gossips regarded as a propitious sign of future conquest and greatness^m. Payments for straw and litter for the chambers frequently occur in ancient households; and Froissart tells us that the chamber in which the Count de Foix died was covered with rushes and green leavesⁿ. But in the fourteenth century, carpets for the floor were sometimes introduced into my lady's bower. Isabella, queen of Edward II., had a black carpet in her chamber at Hertford^o. Twelve carpets were provided for the confinement of Philippa, queen of Edward III., for which sixty pounds were paid from the Exchequer^p. In the romance of Ywaine and Gawine, we read of a home in which,

Introduction
of Carpets.

“The chamber flore and als the bed,
With kloth of gold was al over spred^q.”

And Lydgate describes a chamber as

“With cloth of gold all the floure irailed^r.”

The carpets of Spain were in high estimation during the fifteenth century, and small pieces were laid on the floor by the bedside. In an old

Spanish
Carpets.

^m Sharpe's Malmesbury, p. 299.

ⁿ Chron., tom. iv. cap. xlvi.

^o MS. Cottonian, Galba, E. xiv. fol. 37.

^p Issue Rolls, Excheq.,

Easter, 24 Edw. III.

^q MS. Cottonian, Galba, E. ix. fol. 7. a.

^r Story of Thebes, pt. ii.

domestic poem of this century, the groom of the chamber is instructed to spread,—

“Tapets of Spayne on flor by-syde,
That sprad shyn be for pompe and pryde^s.”

In a beautiful manuscript of Lydgate's in the British Museum, we have a view of a chamber of the fifteenth century: the floor is covered with a green carpet, perhaps of English make, being worked with a small pattern still to be seen at the upholsterer's, and before the fire is spread a hearth-rug handsomely fringed, and exactly like those now in domestic use^t. These, however, were the luxuries of home; a piece of Spanish carpet was laid down on occasions of ceremony, or when my lady added another branch to the genealogical tree of a noble house; but in the usual way, the miserable litter covered the floor, except when, as a luxury in summer,—

“Ladies strew their bowres
With red roses and lylie flowres^u.”

The bed was usually laid upon a bench, sometimes in a recess, before which a curtain was suspended; the *bed-stead*, therefore, was merely a term that denoted the place, or *stead*, in which the bed was made; but when the bench was superseded by more elegant and commodious pieces of furniture, it still retained the same familiar designation. The truckle-bed was the first improvement upon the rough plank or form^v. In the thirteenth century testers

The Bedstead
and its Im-
provements.

^s Sloane MS., 1,986, p. 33.

^t MS. Harl., 2,278, fol. 13. b.

^u Richard Cœur de Lion, l. 3,735.

^v The truckle-bed was a low-framed bedstead, plain, and without any signs of ornament; it long continued to be used as a bedstead for the

were introduced, which were suspended from the roof of the chamber; these were followed by an elegant bedstead, similar to those now in vogue, called the Arabian, and perhaps first known to our ancestors by the crusade. Bed-curtains hung upon rails of "tre" or metal were in use. The four-post, or great standing bedstead, was an introduction of the fifteenth century, and was probably first brought from Austria; it was of an enormous size, and, like the bed of Ware, half filled the chamber. Richard Earl of Arundel left to his son Richard, in 1392, his standing bed, called Clove^x, which is, perhaps, the earliest mention of the bed "estandard." At the foot of the bed there was usually an iron-bound hutch or locker, which served both as a seat, and as a repository for the apparel and wealth of the owner, who, sleeping with his sword by his side, was prepared to protect it against the midnight thief. For still greater security, the bedstead had its secret receptacles. Roger Twysden relates A Tradition of a Royal Bedstead. an anecdote illustrative of this point. On the 21st of August, 1485, Richard III. arrived at Leicester. The charioteers had preceded him with the running wardrobe, and in the best chamber of the "Boar's Head" a ponderous four-post bedstead was set up: it was richly carved, gilded, and decorated, and had a double bottom of boards. Richard slept on it that night. After his defeat and death on Bosworth field, it was stript of its rich hangings; but the heavy

inferior apartments. My lady's maid slept on the floor beneath the bedstead of her mistress, and the trenchor chaplain would

. . . "lie upon the truckle bed,
Whilst his young master lieth o'er his head."

Hall's Byting Satyres, 1599.

^x Test. Vetust., p. 131.

and cumbersome bedstead was left with mine host, and long continued the attraction and the glory of the "Blue Boar," being transmitted from tenant to tenant as a fixture. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the "Blue Boar" was kept by one Clark, whose wife one day, while shaking the bed, observed a piece of gold of ancient coinage roll on the floor; this led to a careful examination, when the double bottom was discovered; upon lifting up a portion of which, the interior was found to be filled with gold, part coined by Richard III., and the rest of earlier times. This bedstead with its old tradition long continued one of the sights of Leicester^v.

The term 'bed' had formerly a wider signification than we now attach to it; it embraced not only the bed, but the curtains, hangings, tester, celour, and all necessary appendages. The simple form of the earlier bedsteads did not afford much scope for the display of these trimmings; but the ancient coverlids, or counterpoints, were exceedingly handsome, made of cloth of gold, and adorned with fringe. At the head was hung a dorsar, as rich and costly as that which distinguished the state chair in the hall. The bedding in the palaces of Henry III. was deemed magnificent, but it was a magnificence which that of the barons of the fourteenth century surpassed. Beds were even manufactured of the rich silken fabrics of the East. Such luxuries were not uncommon among the French nobility, although perhaps rare in England: and there were but few who could, as did Isabella, wife of Sir William Fitz-William, leave, in 1348, "a bed from India with carpets^z." The romancers, who

Mediæval
Beds and
Bedding.

^v Notes and Queries, Second Series, iv. 102.

^z Test. Ebor., p. 50.

loved to dwell upon the decorative beauties of domestic life, give us some gorgeous descriptions of bedding. One speaks of a chamber in the An Eastern Bed described in Romance. middle of which stood a bed of extraordinary splendour, the “utterbrasses therof were of grene jasper, with grete bars of golde, set full of precyous stones, and the crampons were of fyne silver, embordered with golde; the postes of yvery with pomells of corell, and the staves closed in bokeram, covered with crimsen satten; and shetes of sylke with a rych coveryng of ermyns, other clothes of cloth of gold, and foure square pil-lowes wroughte among the Sarasyns^a.” This is a description of an Eastern bed in the florid language of romance, but the crusades had been the means of introducing many of the luxuries of the East, and we often meet with articles of domestic use described as “wrought among the Saracens.”

When a noble was attainted, his household gear was not forgotten: the king usually took the lion’s share, and distributed the remainder Value of Mediæval Beds. among his favourites. * The bed was often the great prize; that belonging to poor Sir Simon Burley, the unfortunate victim of the relentless Gloucester, appears to have been apportioned to the Venerable Father in God, John Bishop of Salisbury; but the King, having perhaps a yearning for a memento of one whom he really loved, kept it for his royal use, and gave the Bishop twenty marks by way of compensation; it was a bed of green tarteran, or Chinese cloth of Tars, embroidered with ships and birds^b. Richard, however, among his

^a Arthur of Lytle Britaine, chap. xliii.

^b Issue Roll, Excheq., 16 Rd. II.

household treasures had several heirlooms in the way of beds. His grandfather, Edward III., left him by will a sumptuous bed wrought with the arms of England and France^c; and his mother, the widow of the Black Prince, bequeathed to him one still more gorgeous, of red velvet, embroidered with ostrich feathers in silver, and heads of leopards in gold, with foliated ornaments and devices issuing from their mouths^d. The importance and value attached to these articles of furniture is curiously shewn in the will of Ralph Lord Basset, who in 1389 left to that person, whosoever he should be, who first bore his surname and arms, the use of his great velvet bed for life^e; and Henry V. bequeathed to the Duke of Exeter a bed of arras, embroidered with scenes of hunting and hawking; but he gave it only on condition that his executors were satisfied that he died possessed of sufficient to fulfil his other bequests. By a writ of Henry VI. it was delivered in 1423 to the Duke, on his paying its estimated value into the Exchequer^f.

When the baron brought home a mistress to his mansion, all the taste of the *tapiser* was lavished upon the nuptial bed; but a quaint custom of those quaint times, assigned on these occasions, this costly article as the perquisite of the head officer of the bed-chamber. On the marriage, in 1297, of the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Edward I., to the Earl of Holland, Sir Peter de Champvent claimed the bridal bed as his fee; it was a royal and sumptuous bed, and had taken two stout sumpter horses to carry

^c Test. Vetust., p. 10.^d Ibid., p. 14.^e Ibid., p. 126.^f MS. Addit. in Brit. Mus., 4,603, art. 103.

it to Ipswich; the Princess not caring to part with so fair a piece of household stuff, Sir Peter received in lieu a sum commensurate with its value^g. Again, on the marriage of the beautiful Philippa of Hainault with Edward III.; Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, claimed the bed upon which the Queen had slept, her slippers, and the lavers in which she had washed, and received one hundred marks as an equivalent^h.

As the lord removed from one manor to another, the beds were usually carried among his baggage; and there were officers in all large households whose duty it was to take down the hangings, truss the beds in sacks or hides, and see to all the necessary business of these frequent removals; they were styled yeomen hangers, and yeomen bed-goers. Richard Earl of Arundel left to one of his daughters a bed of red silk, distinguished as the one "usually" at his manor at Reigate, and to another his blue bed "usually" at his house in Londonⁱ. Portable beds were often called "trussing" beds, and the hangings and paraphernalia for a bed-room was termed a portable chamber: thus, in 1398, the Duc d'Orleans paid eight hundred francs for *un chambre portative*; it consisted of a set of hangings, a seler, dorusar curtains, and a counterpoint^k; which last article was generally the richest portion of the bed^l. In 1381 the populace found in the

Yeomen
Hangers and
Yeomen Bed-
goers.

*Chambre Por-
tative.*

The Counter-
point.

^g MS. Additional, 7,965, fol. 11.

^h Rymer, *Fœdera*, tom. iv. 426.

ⁱ Test. Vetusta, p. 131.

^k Chart. Additional, in Brit. Mus., 2,971.

^l Sometimes called "ppoyntes."—(*Writ of Privy Seal, Arch.*, vol. xxxi. p. 76.) In old inventories we find it as a coverlit, coverlyte, coverpane, coverpoint, and counterpoint.

palace of the Duke of Lancaster a coverlid estimated to be worth a thousand marks, and in the old romance of Sir Bevis we read of;

“Beddes of silk echon,
Quilts of gold thereupon^m.”

The bed-curtains were usually of arras, diapered with a small pattern, or “powdered” with stars, crowns, roses, or fleurs-de-lis, and sometimes they were embellished with the efforts of early English art. In 1377 Gilbert Prince, an artist famous in his day, and patronized by royalty, received from the Exchequer forty-four pounds for ornamenting a pair of bed-curtainsⁿ. These extracts enable us to form an idea of the splendour of mediæval bedding, but extremes are characteristic of the middle ages, and the inquirer is surprised at the anomalies that existed in domestic life. The counterpane, so rich with baudekin and gold, often covered mere sacks of straw. Payments for litter for the beds are frequently recorded even in the household-books of royalty. In a metrical history of Richard II. we are told that the castles of Ireland were almost destitute of furniture, and that there was nothing to lie upon but straw.

Feather beds were introduced into English homes in the early part of the fourteenth century: *unum lectum plumalem*^o is occasionally met with in documents of that period, but we seldom find more than one, mentioned even in the wills of nobles; it was probably the luxury of the best chamber, and was imported from France, as the art of dressing and

Introduction
of Feather
Beds.

^m Line 3,819.

ⁿ Issue Rolls, Easter, 1 Rd. II.

^o Test. Ebor., pp. 5, 46.

preserving feathers does not appear to have been known here. Chaucer, in his "Dream," says,—

"Of downe of pure doves white
I wil give him a fether bed."

And in an old "Guide to Servants," written in the fifteenth century, the groom of the chamber is told—

"The feder bed to bete, but no federys waste".

Bed-making in ancient households was attended with that tedious ceremony which seems to have governed most of the usages of home. Bed-making in the Fifteenth Century. A curious old writer on etiquette gives the following directions for making the straw bed:—

"Gromes palets shall fyll and make liter,
Six fote on length withouten diswer,
One fote y wys it shall be brode,
Well watered, and wrythen be craft ytrode.
Wyses drawn oute at fote and syde,
Well wrethyn and agayne that tyde".

This was the mattress, or matted truss of straw, on which in the homes of wealth the feather bed was placed^r. In "certyn artycles" for regulating the household of Henry VII., we find minute directions for the "making of the king's bed," with Ceremony of making the Royal Bed. that solemn decorum necessary in a duty so important. First, a yeoman or groom of the wardrobe was to bring in the stuff, and to lay it with due reverence at the foot of the bed; a gentleman-usher was then to draw and hold back the curtains; two squires were to stand, one on each side, of the bed's head, and two yeomen of the crown at the foot. A yeoman of the

^p MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 14. a.

^q Ibid., 1,986, fol. 32.

^r Sometimes called a mat. Seven dozen mattresses were purchased for the palace of Henry VII.—(*MS. Additional*, 7,099, fol. 19.)

crown, and a yeoman of the chamber, cautiously assayed the litter and formed the mattress, over which they spread a piece of canvas and threw on the feather bed, well rolling it up and down to make it smooth. The yeomen then laid the various articles of bedding, which we will note as they proceed. First, they threw on the fustians or blankets,—

“Your blankettes shal be of fustayne,
Your shetes shal be of cloth of rayne^s.”

The woollen blanket is said to be an introduction of the fourteenth century, and to have ^{The Blankets and Chalons.} derived its name from Thomas Blaket, or Blanket, a Bristol merchant, who, in 1340, set up looms for weaving them; but the term blanket, as applied to a woollen fabric, is more ancient, and is taken from *blanchetum*, a small woollen garment formerly used as a shirt. Blankets of various textures are mentioned in ancient inventories^t. By the sumptuary law of 1363, ploughmen and labourers were prohibited from wearing any stuff more costly than “blanket and russet.” The blanket was sometimes made of a texture originally imported from Chalons in France, but afterwards extensively manufactured in England by the Chaloners. In Chaucer’s “Reve’s Tale” we read,—

“And in his owen chambre hem made a bedde,
With shetes and with chalons faire yspredde^u.”

The fustians used in the middle ages were of cotton,

^s Squire of Lowe Degre. ^t Proceedings of Arch. Instit., 1848, p. 323.

^u Anciently there was a company of Chaloners in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.—(*Brand’s Newcastle*, ii. 340.) Chalons are mentioned among the household goods of the tradespeople of Colchester in 1301.—(*Rot. Parl.*, ii. 228—265.)

and generally for summer wear. The fustian of Naples was of a finer texture, and used for the pillow beres, or cases. The fustians and sheets were covered with a "pane" of ermine, but rolled down from the pillows to display the head-sheet, which was often embroidered with silk and venire, or Venice-gold. The Head-sheet.
A hero of romance promises his lady-love, that her

"Head shetes shall be of pery pyght,
Wythe dymondes set, and rubys bright."

But it was more frequently made of the fine white "linen of Reynes^x." At the bottom of the bed squires spread the foot-sheet, which was a still more The Foot-sheet. costly covering, it being intended as a seat for the lord whilst undergoing the process of the toilet. When the bed was thus finally arranged, the usher again held back the curtains, and a squire of the body advanced, and from a gold or silver stoup, or stoppe, cast with an aspergillum, holy water upon the bed, to thwart the machinations of evil spirits and to consecrate it to happiness and repose^y.

The art of warming both the chamber and the bed was not altogether unknown in the middle Art of Warming the Chamber and Bed. ages, and many contrivances were invented to compensate for the absence of the fireplace. It is related, that when St. Bernard retired to a cell, he could not be prevailed upon, even in sickness, to indulge in the luxury of a fire; but his brethren, anxious for his life, practised a pious fraud upon him, and heated his cell without his concurrence, by introducing hot air

^x "Hede shetes of Rennes" are noticed among the effects of Hen. V. See Rot. Parl., iv. p. 228.

^y MS. Additional in Brit. Mus., 4,712, fol. 11. b.

through the stone floor under his bed; but we are not informed by what means this was effected^z. The beds were sometimes artificially warmed. Charles of Navarre in his old age was accustomed to have his bed warmed with heated air, but nothing appears to have been invented by which it could be done securely; for the bed one night, says Froissart, caught fire, which so burnt the King that he died in consequence of the injuries he received: this was in 1387^a. The warming-pan, which became not only a domestic utensil, but a domestic ornament of aftertimes, was probably unknown at so early a period; in the Tudor age it was the pride of the housewife to polish its brazen face, and to glean her wisdom from its godly mottoes. The warming-pans in the homes of Henry VIII.^b were of copper-gilt, but the bed of Elizabeth was warmed with a silver pan, as well befitted a virgin queen^c. In mediæval homes the bed, richly arrayed, was often the seat of honour in the day. My lady entertained her friends in the bed-chamber, and thought it consistent with propriety to receive the visits of her lover in that pleasant retreat. Courtship in the middle ages may have been extravagantly chivalrous and romantic, but it was not often chaste, and seldom refined. Rich repasts were served to guests in the bed-chamber. In the romance of Ywayne and Gawine we read,—

The Bed-chamber as a Reception-room.

“ Wit ye wele that Sir Ywayne,
Of her wordes was ful fayne,

^z Maitland's Dark Ages.

^b MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 60.

^a Froissart, Chron., iii. 123.

^c Ibid., 1,650.

In at the dore she him led,
And did him sit upon hir bed.
A quylt ful nobil lay tharon,
Richer saw he never none,
She said if he wolde any thing,
He sold be served at his lyking.
He said, that ete would he fain,
She wente, and come ful sone again.
A capon rosted broght she sone,
A cleane klath and brede theron.
And a pot with rich wine,
And a pece to fil it yn^d."

The bed-chamber, in fact, was the private reception-room of the house. Froissart presented his "Book of Love" to Richard II. in the King's bed-room, and so also did Christine de Pisan offer her book of Poems to her patroness in her bedchamber^e. This custom encouraged perhaps the introduction of the "day-bed," or couch, a more convenient and more appropriate seat than the bed. We owe to chivalry the origin of the domestic couch. As it was the custom that he who was about to receive the honour of knighthood, should watch all night in the chapel, a portable bed, or couch, was usually provided for his convenience. On the knighting of Alexander III. previous to his marriage with the Princess Margaret of England, Henry III. ordered John de Sommercotes, his tailor,

Introduction
of the Day-bed,
or Couch.

^d MS. Cottonian, Galba, E. ix. fol. 4. b. See also *Lai de Guigamar*, MS. Harl., 978, fol. 119, and the romance of *Eliduc*, *ibid.*, fol. 151. b; also *Sir Bevis ap Hampton*, l. 1,086. Indeed, most of the old romances afford illustrations of the various purposes to which the chamber was applied.

^e Froissart, iv. 134, and MS. Harl., 4,431, fol. 1, where there is a beautiful illumination representing a mediæval bedroom.

to make a costly couch to present to the Scottish King^f. In 1221 Henry III. ordered a silken couch to be purchased for the use of his cousin Alienor, and for Isabella, daughter of the King of Scotland, which is perhaps the earliest mention of a couch in our domestic history^g. It is not often alluded to in documents relative to our English home, but it was more generally in use on the Continent in the fourteenth century. Early specimens are scarcely an improvement upon the wooden bench with a bink, but in the fifteenth century the illuminators of the age have left us representations of couches of a much more elegant design^h. In one of the state "chambers of pleasaunce" prepared for Lord Grautehuse, Ambassador from Charles of Burgundy to Edward IV., there was "a rich couche with ffether beddis hanged with a tente knytt lyke a netteⁱ." The couch, however, was rarely found in any other apartment than my lady's bower. According to the usages of chivalry, and the etiquette of the polite society of the Continent, ladies were not allowed to dispose their household furniture as their fancy dictated. Alienor de Poitiers says, that none but a royal dame ought to place her couch before the fire; a lady of inferior rank should be content with the corner of the room; and the fair Alienor is shocked at the rude and presumptuous

^f Claus. Rot., 36 Hen. III.

^g Claus. Rot., 6 Hen. III. Willemin has engraved a couch which he assigns to the twelfth century, having a side terminating with a wooden canopy.—*Choix de Costumes des Peuples de l'Antiquité, et les Décorations intérieures de leurs Maisons. Paris. 1798.*

^h MS. Cottonian, Aug. A. v. 334; MS. Harl., 4,431, fol. 1; MS. Additional, 12,228, fol. 140, 142.

ⁱ MS. Addit.. 6,113, fol. 106. a.

manners of some ladies of the Low Countries, who, violating all rules of etiquette, place their couches before the fire, for which, she adds, they merit the ridicule of all^k !

The superiority of the chamber furniture is evident, instead of the rude forms :—

Chairs and
Tables.

“ Wythe chayres was it set,
And qwychons of vyolet^l : ”—

the cushions often being of my lady's own embroidering. Folding-chairs in the form of an X are depicted in the earliest paintings, some similar in design to the curule chairs of the Roman senators ; this appears to have been a favourite type during the middle ages, and has never been altogether abolished by fashion.

In the romance of “ Horn Childe,” we read that—

“ A rich cheier was undon,
That seiven might sit theron^m. ”

The bed-room chairs were often painted by the artists of the day. Theophilus, writing in the twelfth century, gives directions for painting and gilding folding-chairs and footstoolsⁿ ; and in the British Museum there is a receipt for money, paid for a chair, bought in 1399 for the Duchess of Orleans, described as painted vermillion, and ornamented with dogs, birds, and other devices^o. It is curious to observe the antiquity of our familiar patterns ; the bed-room chairs of the fifteenth century were painted exactly like those still in use^p.

^k St. Palaye, tom. ii. p. 242.

^l Thornton Romances, p. 235.

^m Ritson, Met. Rom., vol. iii. p. 293.

ⁿ Diversarum Artium Scheda,

translated by Hendrie, p. 27.

^o Additional Chart., 2,776.

^p MS. Regis in Brit. Mus., 15 D. i. For examples of chairs of the middle ages, see the following MSS. in the British Museum :—MS. Regis, 14 E. iv. ; MS. Cottonian, Aug. A. v. ff. 94, 425, 103, 116 ; MS. Harl., 4,431, ff. 60, 181 ; MS. Regis, 15 E. vi. ff. 330, 405, 452.

A circular arm-chair was often placed by the bedside.

Tables are but rarely represented in chamber scenes, the portable board and trestles were probably generally used in this apartment; yet tables of a much more ornamental character were occasionally introduced. We read in romance of a maiden who, entertaining her lover,—

“Sett a borde of yvore,
Trestellus ordeyned therof⁹.”

An important article of furniture which deserves some notice was the chest, or great standard, of oak or “cypress wood.” These being richly carved, were an ornament to the gothic chamber. They were imported from Venice and Flanders; and being often selected as appropriate wedding presents, were called “marriage coffers.” Their huge dimensions were neces-

Marriage Cof-
fers and the
Great Stand-
ards.

sary, as they were designed to contain the chamber hangings, the linen of the household, and many of those domestic sundries which sometimes made up the marriage dower. When Isabella, the beautiful daughter of King John, went to be married to the Emperor of Germany, the royal wardrobes were ransacked to set the Princess up in housekeeping, it being suspected that the palace of her imperial spouse might be lacking in the conveniences of domestic life. Not only plate, furniture, and hangings, but even pots and platters were included in her baggage. Joanna, the daughter of Edward III., when she went to marry Peter the Cruel, the son of Alphonso King of Castile, took with her a similar array of house-

⁹ Thornton Romances, p. 293.

hold stuff; for months was Sir John de Baddeley, her treasurer, under royal warrants and writs of Privy Seal, turning out the stores of his Majesty's wardrobes, and trussing the marriage coffers of the Princess; not only with robes, coats, riding-hoods, and her wedding gear of silk and tissue, but cramming them with pots and pans, tankards, bottles, iron forks, and all the sundry utensils necessary for her hall, chamber, pantry, buttery, and kitchen. Her affianced, however, was not to behold these miscellaneous treasures, for Joanna died at Bordeaux before the consummation of her marriage, and so perhaps escaped the jealousy of Mary de Padilla, and the fate of poor Blanche de Bourbon.

But coffers were not only used for wedding outfits; Paris, that valiant hero of romance, had in his chamber "two grete standardes, couerd after the guyse of Fraunce; one was ful of clothe of golde and sylke, and the other of harnoys [armour] and many other thynges^r." The Venetian coffers, which were more used in English homes than those made after the "guyse of Fraunce," were vast, unwieldy pieces of furniture, and must have made a trip into the country a weighty affair, for in those old fashioned times there was no moving about without them. When my lord the King went from London

^r Parys and Vyenne: printed by Caxton, sign. B. ii. b. The money and plate of the master was usually kept in the chamber coffers, and the bed-room served as his counting-house. In an inventory of the fifteenth century, we find "a prus desk chest" in the chamber.—(*New Retrospect*, i. p. 101.) In 1459, Margaret Paston writes to Sir John, saying that she had taken the measure of his chamber, and found that if his "cofers and his cownterwery" were set between the bed and the door, there would not be space for him to sit beside them.—(*Letters*, iii. p. 324.) Documentary illustrations of French coffers of the fourteenth century may be found in Additional Charters in British Museum Nos. 2690—2829.

to Hampton Court, carts were hired “to bring the grete standardes” in which the running wardrobe was packed^s. Old stories tell of laughing beauties hiding merrily in these ponderous chests, and, being unable to lift the massive lid again, there languishing to death. These sad traditions recur to the mind as we open a mediæval coffer, and we almost expect to see within, ghastly bones mingling with the robes of beauty.

The fancy coffer or jewel box of my lady was a smaller and more elaborate production. The Jewel Coffer. Modern art can scarcely surpass the taste displayed in the decoration of these bijoux of furniture. Coffers of ivory and ebony, of crystal, walnut-tree, or cypress covered with filigree-work of gold and silver, occur in ancient inventories. The love of jewellery was excessive during the middle ages, and royalty too often impoverished the exchequer to purchase diamonds and pearls. Five sumpter horses were hired in 1297 to carry the jewel coffer of the Countess of Holland to Ipswich^t. Even when disgrace and old age may be supposed to have robbed vanity of her vigour, Isabella of France expended during one year no less than £1,399 in jewellery; a sum equivalent to £20,000 of our money^u.

On the toilet board, or hung against the wall, was Steel “Looking-glasses.” that indispensable article in a lady’s chamber, the mirror. It was made of beryl, or high polished steel, but called a glass: thus we often

^s MS. Arundel, 97, ff. 169, 176. Some coffer in the palace of Hen. VIII. were made of iron “wrought all over w^t sondrie pictures and antiques.”—(*MS. Harl.* 1,419, fol. 142.)

^t MS. Additional, 7,965, fol. 13. b.

^u MS. Galba, E. xiv.

read of looking-glasses of steel. In the "Life of Ali-saundre," we are told that—

"The maydenes lokyn in the glas,
For to tyffen heore fas^x."

Which, however, meant perhaps a mirror of steel. Smaller mirrors were carried in the pocket, hung on the girdle, or inserted in my lady's fan.

The toilet-board was also supplied with "pomades" and sweet soap, perfumed waters, and brushes for the hair. Combs of ivory were in use as early as the eleventh century. Henry III. had one of gold adorned with precious stones^y. The barber of Edward III. had two ivory combs allowed him from the royal wardrobe^z; and when a squire of the chamber dressed his master, he was directed to "kemb his hed with a comb of yvery^a." Early examples of these ivory combs are preserved, and are esteemed for the carving with which they are adorned, and the aid which they afford to the history of decorative art.

Previous to the fourteenth century my lady arranged her toilet with skewers of bone, wood, or silver; but in the fourteenth century the ^{Pins and Pin-making in Eng-}land. manufacture of pins of white or blanchéd wire superseded them. In 1347 twelve thousand pins were delivered from the royal wardrobe for the Princess Joan^b. Henry and Anderson date the manufacture of pins in England from the middle of the sixteenth century, but the pins of English make were famous, even on the Continent, nearly two hundred years before. In 1400 the Duchess of Orleans purchased of Jehan le Bracon-

^x Line 4,109. ^y Rot. Pip. 53 Hen. III., 1267. ^z Arch., xxxi. p. 22.

^a MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 14. b.

^b Arch., xxxi. p. 142.

nier, Espinglier of Paris, several thousand long and short pins, besides five hundred pins of English make, "de la façon d'Angleterre^c." The money paid to Jehan for these trifles amounted to a considerable sum; they were expensive luxuries, and led to the custom of allowing the wife pin-money^d.

On interesting occasions my lady's chamber was decorated with unusual splendour. The treasures of the wardrobe were ransacked for its adornment; the snow-white sheets of Brittany, the pillow beres, and the choicest linen, smelling sweetly of orris powder and myrrh, were brought forth to do honour to the auspicious event. The roof and walls of the chamber were hung with white satin, cloth of silver, arras, or snowy linen, according to the rank and wealth of the owner. Before one of the windows a thin curtain was suspended, but all the others were closely enveloped with tapestry; as much to exclude the wind, as to darken the chamber. Carpets were spread in double layers over the floor, and a white traverse, embroidered with gold and deeply fringed, hung before the entrance. Under a sparver or canopy stood the state bed, resplendent with the richest fabrics of the loom. The one prepared for the accouchement of Philippa, queen of Edward III., was of green velvet, embroidered with sea-sirens in gold, each bearing a shield on which was wrought the arms of England and Hainault. This sumptuous bed, which had employed

My Lady's
Chamber on
Interesting Oc-
casions.

^c Additional Chart. in Brit. Mus., No. 2,785.

^d Mistress Anne Howard used "fyne pins" in the fifteenth century.—(*Household Manners and Expenses*.) The "pyn cases" of Katherine of Arragon were covered with cloth of gold and "nedille worke."—(*MS. Regis*, 7 F. xiv., art. 23.)

the royal tapisers for months, cost upwards of five hundred pounds^e, a sum equivalent to eight thousand pounds of our currency. The sheets of the state bed were of lawn, the blankets of Naples fustian, and the head sheet of the finest cloth of reynes. The colour of the pane, or counterpoint, was chosen to contrast with that of the bed, and the usual one of scarlet velvet, richly wrought in Venice gold, bossed with pearls, and furred with the choicest ermine, gave a dazzling brilliancy to the magnificent couch. On the opposite side of the natal chamber, under a sparver surmounted with the family arms, was the pallet-bed, also richly apparelled :—

“With damaske white and azure blew,
Well diapred with lylies newe.”

And between the two beds stood a chair of state, covered with crimson cloth of gold, softly cushioned, and magnificently accoutred. The cupboard, or buffet, was adorned with a canopy of the same material as that with which the room was hung; the top was covered with white silk or damask, a rich tapet was spread on the bottom shelf, and on it were arranged the ewer and basin, the cups, spice-plate, and comfit-boxes. On the Continent the number of shelves on the buffet denoted the rank of my lady. Mediæval etiquette allowed a queen to have five shelves in her buffet, but the wife of a knight was deemed presumptuous who aspired to more than two. This refinement in politeness does not appear to have been observed in English homes, where the number was alone regulated by the taste or caprice of the owner. On the top shelf of the buffet were placed two

^e Issue Roll, Excheq., 9 Edw. III.

high candlesticks furnished with the finest Paris wax, and kept burning both day and night. A couple of stools, and a bench with a baudekin spread over it, were provided for the gossips; all the usual grooms of the chamber being on these occasions excluded. When prepared to receive company, my lady sat in the chair of estate or on the ermine foot-sheet, arrayed in costly habiliments. The robe of Philippa of Hainault was of pure white, embroidered with gold of divers workmanship^f. It was the privilege of the maidens to offer wine and spice to the guests, and to hand round the gold and silver drageoirs with comfits and sweetmeats. For a month my lady's chamber was thus sumptuously arrayed, during which time she expected to receive the congratulations of her friends, and the natal offerings for her babe^g.

Adjoining the chamber was an apartment appropriated to the infant. Where wealth was at command, this was adorned with all that maternal tenderness could devise. The cradles and cots were similar to those with which we were all familiar in our infancy^h. They were made of wicker or wood. In the "Proces of the Seven Sages," we read of three nurses who

"Wente out of the hall,
And set the cradil under the wall."

The duties of the three nurses are thus set forth:—

"One gaf it souke als it would serve,
Ye toder wasshes it and bathes,

^f Issue Roll, Excheq., 9 Edw. III. ^g MS. Additional in Brit. Mus., 4,712, fol. 14. b. See also St. Palaye, tom. ii. ^h See representations in MS. Regis, 15 E. vi., fol. cccxx.

Makes the bed and dons the clothes.
Ye third wasshes y^e shetes oft,
And rokkes it on slepe soft¹."

The mediæval chambers were often furnished with "baynes," or baths, although they were perhaps but mere tubs, decorated with a cover or canopy of tapestry. Isabella, queen of Edward II., had a bath adjoining her chamber in Hertford Castle^j. A bath was made ready for the gentle knight Sir Eglamour; and when Sir Bevis of Hampton was received by his lady love,—

"Into a chamber she gan him take,
And riche bathes she lete him make."

When the heroes of Charlemagne had feasted in the hall, "they had the baynes chauffed, and then they bayned and refayted them in theyr ease;" and at the coming out of their baynes they were "wel adouted with mantels, ryche of sylke and golde broudred^k." In one of the grand chambers prepared for the ambassador of Charles of Burgundy to Edward IV., were baynes covered with tents of white cloth¹. The water was often perfumed with sweet-smelling herbs.

It is a pleasing feature of the olden time that most of the large manors had a chapel attached, in which the domestic chaplain officiated, and in which the members of the household daily congregated. The haughty baron regarded this small but sacred repository with the utmost reverence, for it was there that his proud and mighty ancestors, memorable for a thousand valiant deeds, slept in death. The

ⁱ MS. Cottonian, Galba, E. ix. fol. 26. b. ^j MS. Galba, E. xiv. fol. 38. a.

^k Caxton's History of Charles the Great, 1485, sign. E. vi.

¹ MS. Additional, 6,113, fol. 106. a.

mausoleums adorned with the richest and most costly efforts of art, that recorded their triumphs and their virtues, and the faded trophies of their ancient greatness which covered the walls, seemed to reflect honour and glory upon him, as the living representative of a long life of ancestral worth. Even where the domestic apartments of home presented but few signs of comfort, and no evidence of taste in their adornment, the chapel was amply furnished with everything deemed necessary to the due and solemn celebration of religion. All that wealth could purchase, and mediæval art achieve, was displayed in the fittings, the plate, the vestments, and the books of the sacred office.

In addition to the chapel, there was often attached
Devotional
Closets. to the bed-room an apartment for private devotion. It was sometimes called the oriel, the closet, or the cubycle. St. Werburge, we are told,—

“Made her palace sometymes an hospitall,
 Her private cubycle, a devoute oratorye^m.”

And we read in romance, that Parys had, next his chamber, a little room, twelve feet long, as a private oratory, in which upon an altar, stood the “majestie of our Lorde Jehu Chryste,” and in each corner a candlestick of silver. Here came the brave knight “for to make his sacrifice when he arose and when he went to bedⁿ.” The oriel of the princess of Hungary is thus described in the “Squire of Lowe Degré:”—

“In her oryall ther she was,
 Closed all with royal glas,
 Fulfilled it was with ymagery,
 Every window by and by.”

^m Lyfe of St. Werburge, sign. G. iiiii. ⁿ Parys and Vyenne, sign. B. ii.

Most of the mansions of the olden time had pleasure grounds, or "pleasaunt pleying places," for the ladies. They were sometimes without the castle wall, and approached by one of those little postern-gates so much celebrated in romance, as connected with many a tale of love, and the scene of many a stolen interview. Grottoes and fountains adorned the grounds, and the flower-beds were stored with varied beauties, and sweet-smelling herbs for my lady's coffer. These pleasant pastures were reserved for the ladies; but the ladies often extended of their own free will this privilege to the other sex, and entertained their gallants among the roses.

My Lady's
Playing Place.

In the fourteenth century, we observe the progress of refinement and comfort by the introduction in domestic buildings of the parlour; an apartment which, whilst it did not partake of the publicity of the hall, obviated the necessity of encroaching upon the privacy of the chamber. The English, who borrowed from the French the custom of using the bed-chamber for the indiscriminate reception of guests, were, however, the first to abolish the usage. There was often at this period a portal introduced behind the dais, which led by a short flight of steps to this withdrawing-room, or, as it was variously called, the chamber of "pleasaunce," of parements, or the privy parlour, the parlering or speaking-room of the house. A window was generally introduced, that my lord and his guests might behold the festivities in the hall, and enjoy on Whitsuntide, on Christmas Eve, and other holy-days, those disports and revels which made the halls of the olden time ring, with joyous mirth.

Introduction
of the Parlour,
or Speaking-
room.

It was, moreover, a snug and comfortable retreat, and possessing more of the attributes of home than the great chamber, we can scarcely wonder that the baron shewed his love for family seclusion, by occasionally partaking of a quiet little dinner in the parlour, in preference to the festive glories of the sovereign hall.

More Inno-
vations.

This, however, as an infringement of ancient usage,—a usage, by the way, that had many social advantages to commend it,—was long regarded as a serious offence to good manners. Piers the Ploughman denounces the growing practice of dining in “privy parlors with chimneys,” as an indication of the effeminate luxury of the age. The good and benevolent Bishop Grosteste recommended that all “ete in the hall afore youre meyn,” as a custom that would redound to their profit and worship^o. It was ordained in some rules for the government of the royal household in 1458, that the order of “settynge in the halle be kepte aftir the olde custome^p.” Household books are emphatic in commending this honourable usage, and denouncing its breach as the result of a niggardly rule, or as an affectation of luxury. Our kings until late in the fifteenth century upheld the old custom. Henry VII. usually dined in the great hall at Eltham^q; and the ordinances made for the government of the royal household in 1526 complains, that “sondrie nobilmen, gentlemen, and others, doe much delighte and use to dine in corners and secret places, not repairing to the high chamber^r.” But these admonitions availed nothing: the comforts and home atmosphere of the par-

^o MS. Sloane, 1,986, fol. 197.

^p MS. Lansdown, No. 2, fol. 73. a.

^q Arch., vol. vi. p. 366.

^r MS. Cottonian, Vesp., C. xiv. fol. 231.

lour proved too seductive, and modern taste will sympathize with the baron in his choice.

Perhaps the greatest attraction of the parlour was the chimney, which honest Piers thought so luxurious, and which even Harrison, in the sixteenth century, looked upon as a sign of growing degeneracy. We did not gain our fireside without a struggle; and sage old men of yore shook their heads at these innovating signs, and saw in them the decay of the commonwealth and other sad disasters. The history of our English fireside, with its various appliances and comforts, presents many features of interest. It has its history, too, in our legislative enactments. The ancient curfew, or *couvre-feu*, was a custom prevalent throughout Europe in the eleventh century, and was first, perhaps, introduced into English manners in the time of William the Conqueror. At the sound of a bell, all fires by being covered were to be extinguished: in some cities none were to leave their homes after the curfew on pain of severe forfeiture or imprisonment. In an old tale, a wife who had been shut out of doors by her husband complains that soon they will ring the curfew, and that if she is found in the streets, the watch will take her to prison^s. This custom, which was more or less enforced as a domestic regulation for many centuries, gradually died out of use; but in old country towns and remote villages, where the shadows of antiquity lingered on the threshold of home, it was observed as late as to the end of the eighteenth century.

The more general introduction of fireplaces against

^s MS. Cottonian, Galba, E. ix. fol. 30.

the wall, with chimneys to carry off the smoke, led
 The Chimney Apparel. to improvements and contrivances which the
 old centre hearth could scarcely have suggested. Perhaps the earliest existing examples are those in the castles of Rochester and Coningsburgh, which have been referred by good authorities to the twelfth century^t. More recent specimens—and they are found at all subsequent periods in parlours and old bed-chambers of mediæval homes—as well as those depicted in the illuminations of ancient manuscripts, are remarkable for their massive masonry and their ample dimensions, which sometimes appear out of all proportion to the size of the apartment. Occasionally the jambs were richly ornamented, and, terminating in quaintly carved brackets, supported the arch or chimney-piece, which usually projected like a canopy over the fire-place; it was painted with a history, adorned with a choice piece of arras or storied needle-work, inscribed with goodly mottoes, or emblazoned with armorial bearings. Images were displayed in niches. In the chamber of Imogen the chimney was—

“South the chamber; and the chimney-piece
 Chaste Dian, bathing.”

In Tudor mansions the chimney-pieces were exceedingly beautiful: some of those in the palaces of Henry VIII. were designed by Holbein, and did credit to his genius. French and Italian artists were employed in their construction^u; and the chimney corners of Gothic homes were often beautified and modernized by the introduction of a new chimney “apparel,” which was

^t Domestic Architecture, vol. i. p. 13.

^u MS. Roll in Bibl. Reg. in Brit. Mus., 14 B. iv. a.

sometimes fixed with screws, so that it could be removed as the owner left the mansion. The shelf called the mantle-piece was an after introduction, and, it is supposed, was originally intended as a convenience on which to hang the mantles before the fire to dry. Our ancestors were fond of a cheerful blaze, and they piled huge logs and faggots upon the hearth :—

“ Damsell, loke there be
A fyre in the chymené,
With ffagottes of fyre tree *.”

In the parlour the billets were heaped against the reredos, or plate of iron fixed against the back of the chimneys ; and the andirons intended for this apartment, possessed many features of The Andirons,
or Dog-irons. ornamentation : we even read of dog-irons of silver. The head-pieces usually bore the arms of the owner : those in the palaces of Henry VIII. were made of copper and elaborately wrought, having “ in the toppes of theym two antique boyes with winges, holdyng shields in their handes ;” the “ horses of iron curiously wroughte with sondrye antiques ;” and others with “ antiques painted [perhaps enamelled] and gilte, having in the toppes of them the kynges arms crowned, supported by his grace’s beastes.” These will call to the mind of the reader those in the chamber of Imogen, which were adorned with

“ Two winking Cupids,
Of silver, on foot standing, nicely
Depending on their brands.”

But faggots and billets were to give way to the general introduction of mineral fuel, when Introduction
of Grates. the dog-irons were rarely used, except in the

* Thornton Rom., 235.

hall, where the glorious yule-logs were burned in the old-fashioned style until a late period. When coal or charcoal was consumed in the parlour, it was put into a firepan or portable grate, which was sometimes called a “court chimney;” it was made “grate wise” upon wheels, and occasionally “garnished with copper and gilt^y,” they were placed on the hearth in winter, and removed in summer to make way for the bough-pots and posies. The fixed stove is a comparatively modern invention, whilst the fender is an introduction of the sixteenth century. We find it in Tudor homes: among

The *Garde-feu*,
or Fender. the furniture belonging to Henry VIII. was

“one harthe of iron, being but a forepart, with two sides tyanned, and all over wroughte in divers places with antique worke^z,” but they are rarely met with in ancient inventories, and were seldom more than a mere band of iron. In one of the chambers at Goodrich Court is a reredos and dogs of iron, with a fender of brass bearing the date 1605^a. A set of fire-

The
Fire “Tools.” irons anciently consisted of a two-pronged fork, a pair of tongs, and a billet-hook, the “stales” of which were often “garnished with copper, gilt and graven^b,” to these were sometimes added the shovel. The poker is an invention which superseded the billet-hook on the general introduction of coal. As

The Pot on the
Parlour Fire. in the olden time the parlour fire was made serviceable to the kitchen, a pot-hook was almost invariably suspended over it, on which to hang a kettle of fish or a mess of pottage. We observe this

^y MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 141. b. ^z MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 142, a. In the Soulage Collection are fenders of Italian cinque cento work.

^a Meyrick's Ancient Furniture, pl. lv. ^b MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 141. b.

in paintings intended to represent the apartments of princes and nobles; a fact that illustrates the domestic simplicity of our ancestors, and was perhaps the reason why the pots and kettles were so handsomely decorated, and frying-pans and gridirons made of silver. The kettles in the palace at Westminster were copper-gilt, "the ladles bearing the royal armes" of Henry VIII. The toasting-fork, which hung on a nail at the chimney side, was tipped with metal chasing. The bellows is not altogether a modern contrivance: bellows of a large size, similar to those used in our smithies, are depicted in mediæval manuscripts as appendages to the kitchen furnace, and the bellows-blower appears in the list of the officers of the household. The introduction of the hand-bellows, however, is usually attributed to the Germans in the sixteenth century, but one Nicholas de Yhonge, of Flanders, who became a citizen of York in the reign of Edward III., introduced the hand-bellows into domestic use^c. John Baret, in 1463, leaves to Janet, his niece, "a peyr belwys^d." A pair in the possession of Mr. Parker, of Browsholme Hall, is curiously carved, with a scene representing a fox in a surplice, preaching to a congregation of birds and beasts. Tradition says, that this curious specimen of fireside furniture was left by Henry VI., with his boots, spurs, and glove, at Bolton Hall; but Sir Samuel Meyrick, who has engraven it in his work on "Ancient Furniture^e," discredits the story, and pronounces it of Elizabethan workmanship. It is cer-

Introduction
of the Domes-
tic Bellows.

^c York Phil. Soc. Proceed., p. 10. ^d Wills of Bury St. Edmund's.
In the parlour of the Drapers' Company there was "a payr bellus" as early as 1499.—(*Herbert's Hist., Drapers*, i. 465.) ^e Pl. lv.

tain that during the sixteenth century, these articles of domestic use, being intended to hang by the parlour fire, were highly decorated; sometimes they were gilt and painted, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, or damascened with silver. The gussets, fastened with trefoil bullion-headed nails, were made of scarlet velvet, and the nozzles were quaintly chased and ornamented with masks. Those of Flemish or English make were more homely in design, but they endeavoured to compensate for the roughness of the carving by inscribing it with mottoes, such as—

“As the sparks do upward fly,
Think that thou hast trouble nigh.”

or,—

“Now man to man is so unjust,
That we cannot another trust^f.”

Nor was the fireside without its elegancies. It was often adorned with screens of French and Venetian work, or with silken pictures set in frames of dark-grained walnut-tree; those with carved and branched feet were most fashionable. We read of screens of purple taffeta, deeply fringed, standing on “feet of tymbre,” painted and gilt; others of wicker, and smaller ones “of silke, to hold gainte the fyre^g.”

From the illuminated manuscripts of the fifteenth century we may gain a tolerable idea of the parlours of our early home^h; and we cannot fail to observe as an important feature, the capacious window recesses, which were sometimes, indeed, little

The Parlour
Window.

^f Nine pairs of bellows with “pypes of tynne plate” are mentioned among the fireside appurtenances of Henry VIII.

^g MS. Harl., 1,419, ff. 56, 61, 140; Gage’s Hengrave, p. 27.

^h See five paintings in MS. Cottonian, Aug., A. v. ff. 327, 334.

rooms of themselves, and furnished on each side with goodly benches of stone-work. The fenestrels were glazed with small, diamond-shaped panes, ornamented with the baron's arms in proper colours, and hung with curtains of arras or say. The old bay-window, the introduction of which we may refer to the close of the fourteenth century, became in Tudor homes more general, from an increasing fondness for domestic life. They formed pleasant retreats on summer evenings; there the damsels would ply their distaffs, and the young squires would seek them there, and with gallant words make love, or check-mate them in a game of chess. Glazed with white and ruby glass, when other windows were open to the wind; curtained, when other windows were bare; carpeted, when other floors were littered with rushes, they became the favourite nooks of home, in which the sweetest and happiest moments of life were spent. No wonder that our forefathers loved them, and, in spite of conservative prejudices, knocking away the dull, narrow loop-holes, had "fayre baye windowes" introduced into the halls and parlours of their homeⁱ.

Old Bay-
windows.

The character of the parlour furniture varied with the taste and habits of the owner. Benches or lockers were the usual seats,—cumbersome pieces of rough carpenter's work that half filled the room; but in the later period of the middle ages, chairs and stools were introduced into this apartment. John Baret of Bury in 1463 left to his niece

The Parlour
Furniture.

ⁱ For notices of bay-windows, see Wardrobe Account of Edward IV. in MS. Harl., 4,780, fol. 20. a.; MS. Additional, 7,099, fol. 57.

a chair, and three footstools with cushions, that were in his parlour; he had also a round table, and other articles of a superior make^j, which prove that the homes of the middle classes were becoming furnished with new accessories to comfort.

It is pleasing to observe during the fifteenth century the introduction of bookcases, as articles of domestic furniture. They were carved and ornamented with taste, and the curtains that usually hung before them, were as much, perhaps, to hide the scantiness of the store, as to protect the precious volumes from the dust. We rarely find this article mentioned at an earlier epoch; for during the middle ages books were seldom the companions of home. Their mission was not as yet known; even the gay "Romaunt de la Rose," the fair "Florence de Blanchfleurs," and the "Seven Thousand Virgins" were immured in monastic libraries, to keep uncongenial companionship with monks; who, however, it must be owned, were not jealous of their beauties, but occasionally allowed them to solace the fair daughters of the baron, who would borrow them from the convent library to amuse their leisure hours. Yet we have notices to prove that books were not altogether strangers in the homes of wealth. Guy Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, in 1359 left a large collection of romances to the monks of Bordesley Abbey in Worcestershire^k. The widow of

^j Wills and Invent., Bury St. Edmund's: published by Camden Society. The parlour of Sir I. Newporte, a century later, was also furnished with two forms, two round tables, a standing cupboard, two chairs, four "litel stoles wrought w^t nedleworke," a screen, a pair of andirons, and a pair of bellows.—(*MS. Addit.*, 10,128.)

^k Lambeth MSS., 577, fol. 18.

Geoffrey Lord Say, in 1369 left to John de Harlston her French and Latin books¹; and Lady West in 1395 bequeathed all her Latin, English, and French books to her daughter-in-law^m. But such instances are rare; books were costly luxuries, in which princes and nobles could alone indulge. Who but a king could pay as Edward III. did to Isabella, a nun of Ambresbury, a sum equal to nine hundred pounds of our currency for a book of romanceⁿ; it was, doubtless, richly "dight" by the pretty nuns of Ambresbury, and worthy of royal regard, for my lord the King kept it much in his chamber. Richard II. paid twenty-eight pounds, a sum equal perhaps to four hundred pounds now, for a Bible and two volumes of romance^o. Large sums were paid for garnishing and binding. Genius and art bestowed their labours on the decoration of books until they became gems and jewels: letters of gold and rubrics of vermillion glittered upon vellum of Tyrian blue; scenes of chivalry and knightly combat, portraits of royalty and beauty, pageants and festive glories; the tale of love, and pictures of domestic life, crowded the lettered page, and made them the delight of even those who could not read. The noble gracefully expressed his reverence for literature, by incasing his books in velvet, enriched with diamonds and rubies embedded in gold; and he loved to amuse his leisure by hearing the domestic chaplain read from these costly treasures. Froissart tells us that he used to read to Count Gaston de Foix the tale of the "Knight of the Sun of Gold," or some other romance, every evening

¹ Test. Vetust., p. 83.

^m Ibid., p. 137.

ⁿ Issue Rolls, Excheq., 9 Edw. III.

^o Ibid., 3 Rd. II., East.

after supper. In the fifteenth century books became more accessible ; an increasing demand led to the transcribing of manuscripts upon a more extensive and cheaper system, and the invention of printing at once introduced them into the homes of the middle class. Thus, in 1464, Sir John Howard could purchase a French and English book, "callyd *Dives et Pauper*," for thirteen shillings and fourpence, which was equal only to a fat ox or half-a-dozen sheep ; and a Missal was bought for three shillings and fourpence, a sum which a mechanic could have earned in ten days^p. Yet, although books were more accessible, indications of literary taste were seldom observed in the homes of the English yeoman. Chaucer, it is true, in writing in the honest language of the vulgar tongue such sweet and dulcet stories, led many to seek in works of fiction a pastime for their leisure hours ; but the majority depended more for their home recreations on the chess-board^q, in tricks of hazard, or the boisterous merriments of the hall. Even the ladies loved to play at bowls, or amuse themselves with a game at nine-pins in the parlour.

But the luxuries and home comforts discovered in the damasked chambers and parlours of wealth, Homes of the People. descended to the enjoyment of the people but in a very limited extent. We have indeed but scanty information to assist us, in forming an idea of the general appearance of home among the middle class, and still less as to the condition of the English peasantry. The merchant princes, it would appear,

^p Household Expenses, pp. 260, 284.

^q A chess-board, with a bag of chessmen, often hung on a nail in the hall.—(*MS. Reg.*, 14 *Edw. IV.*, ff. 250, 256.)

sometimes vied in personal magnificence with the noble, and were enabled to display in their city home, the luxuries and appliances gained by successful commerce. The halls of the Basings and the Crosbys were noble edifices, and fit habitations for royalty; but the dwellings of the middle class were often temporary in their structure, and inconvenient in their arrangement. We have, it is true, many interesting examples of ancient timber houses still existing, which display in their ornamental carpentry considerable taste and ingenuity, and in their enormous breast-summers and ponderous beams, a strength which has outlived buildings erected with a more durable material; but such, were the habitations of the rich. The homestead of the yeoman, who kept hospitality upon a revenue of five pounds by the year, who was thought well to do, and revered among his neighbours; and the dwellings of the trading class, were of a far less substantial nature. Thus Lord Howard in 1482 arranged with Richard Turnour, a carpenter who was at work upon his "tenantarys" in the town of Colchester, to take down a new house which he had erected there, and store it in the barns until my lord should be able to send his teams with it to Stoke, where Richard the carpenter agreed to "rere and set it up" as my lord should appoint, to garnish it according to his covenant, to make "the gryse^r as my lord wyll desyre yt, and make the wyndovis with lyntells and moynelles^s."

^r Stairs; the landing-place of the upper story was called the 'gryse-hede.'

^s Howard's Household Book, p. 121. See also a letter from Sir John Wingfield among the Paston Letters relative to the removal of a wooden house, vol. iii. p. 140.

Until the fifteenth century, indeed, the homes of the trading class rarely consisted of more than a ground floor with a lofet^t above; except in the towns, where an additional story was usually added, that the lower portion might be appropriated to the storing and vending of goods. Froissart, describing the house in which the Earl of Flanders took refuge during the storming of Bruges by the Ghent army, says that it was a very unfit habitation for such a lord; being a small house without halls or apartments, dirty, smoky, and as black as jet, and having but one poor chamber, over which was a loft approached by a ladder of seven steps, which the Earl ascended, and hid himself under the straw and coverlid^u. In the main thoroughfares of the cities, in the resorts of commerce and fashion, street architecture improved with expanding trade, and rents proportionately increased. Whilst in the fourteenth century a house in Lombard-street, deemed sufficient for Isabella, queen of Edward II., in her widowhood, was to be hired for twenty-five shillings and twopence per annum^x; in the fifteenth century, a grocer's shop with "a place above it," in Cheapside, was worth a yearly rental of £4 6s. 8d.^y, a sum equivalent to sixty pounds of our currency.

At the commencement of the fourteenth century we

^t Sometimes called a coplaud, from which the term 'cockloft' is derived. The furniture of a 'coplaude' is given in MS. Harl., 1,419, ff. 369, 372.

^u Froissart, Chron., ii. 159.

^x MS. Cottonian, Galba, E. xiv. fol. 37. a.

^y Howard's Household Book, pp. xxx., 351. As late as the year 1541, a house was hired in London for the standing of the wardrobe and "riche cootes of the garde" belonging to Henry VIII., at the yearly rental of 34s. 8d.—(*MS. Arundel, in Brit. Mus.*, No. 97, fol. 176.)

observe but slight indications of comfort or personal wealth among the trading class. The chamber might boast of a russet hanging, a bed with a chalon coverlid and fustian sheets, a strong box, and a stool; whilst a mazer, a few spoons, and perhaps a silver cruce, were sometimes displayed with honest pride upon the unadorned cupboard of the baker or the smith; but it was not until the succeeding century that the homes of this class possessed many features of comfort, or that their household chattels embraced any articles but those absolutely requisite to the most limited hospitality.

From the demand for labour and the rate of wages, we might have expected the working classes to have enjoyed some degree of domestic comfort. Artizans in wood and metal, as well as the

Domestic Con-
dition of the
Working Class.

“Mason, hewer, or crafty quarreour,”

received during the fifteenth century sixpence a-day, and the labourers who assisted them, from twopence to fourpence, which were better wages than the same class could earn in the more advanced days of the Tudors. But these earnings, although at some periods relatively equivalent to the wages of the mechanic of the present day, being fixed by custom, or by legislative enactments, and seldom by the relative price of the necessaries of life, rendered his domestic comforts so liable to fluctuation, as to frequently plunge him into absolute poverty, whilst at other seasons, when he possessed the means of replenishing his cupboard, he found but few opportunities of improving his home; none caring as yet, to import or manufacture furniture and utensils suitable to his humble condition.

But whatever may have been the condition of the

Condition of
the English
Peasantry in
the Olden Time.

mechanic, the peasant need not look with any feelings of regret upon the past. It was long, indeed, before he broke the fetters of his ancient vassalage, or that his neck was free from the iron badge of his servitude. As, however, by the earnest admonitions, the patient remonstrances, and constant intercessions of the Church, his condition became gradually ameliorated; he was enabled to taste some of the blessings and privileges of home, and learnt to value his miserable hut; with some semblance of freedom; far above the better lodging, and more abundant fare of the baronial manor. Ignorant of the principles of trade, devoid of the least shadow of education, and excluded from the mysteries and crafts of the guilds, he seldom rose above the lowest rank of labourers, or obtained for his industry sufficient for his simple wants. Twopence a-day was the rate of wage for him who held the plough or tilled the soil, as late as the close of the fifteenth century; and often, indeed, as we learn from old household accounts, he received but a penny, with a miserable "livery" of pottage. In harvest time, when his wages equalled the wages of a mechanic; or in seasons of unusual abundance, as in 1340, when there was such "grete plente of vitaille," that a quarter of wheat was sold for two shillings, a fat ox for six shillings and eightpence, and half-a-dozen pigeons for a penny^z, he might hope to enjoy an ample meal; but the imagination can scarcely wish to picture a peasant's home in times of scarcity, or during the visitation of those oft-recurring famines, which so enhanced the value of commodities, that a bushel of wheat, as in 1435, was

^z Chronicle of London, p. 56.

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sold for forty pence<sup>a</sup>. It was well for the English peasant that those old times were inclined to hospitality, that the hungry were sometimes fed in monastic kitchens, and that the alms-dish and the almoner had not as yet disappeared from the usages of home.

Some architectural remains of early cottages are still in existence: the walls are of clay or rubble, and of a nature incapable of supporting a roof of any weight; the floors were probably paved with pebbles. Sometimes it had two apartments, the first occupied by the cow, the pigs, and the poultry; and in the other were huddled promiscuously all the members of a peasant's family, — a circumstance that afforded a fruitful subject for the fableaux of the Norman trouvères, who often loved to turn a jest in reference to the shifts to which indigence compelled the peasant to resort; which the minstrels avenged, by singing in the ale-houses and about the streets, sturdy ballads respecting the follies and extravagance of the rich. Longland, in "*Piers the Ploughman*," gives an uninviting picture of a cottage home. The dank smoke from the turf fire could find no vent but through the loop-holes and chinks of the door; and we are not surprised that the ploughman should complain, that the

"Smoke and smorthae smyt in his eyen."

Chaucer, in the "*Tale of the Nun's Priest*," describes the cottage of the widow as consisting of two apartments, designated even in such poverty, by the high-sounding appellations of hall and bower. Whilst the widow and her "daughter two," slept in the bower; chancicleer and

<sup>a</sup> Continuation Hist. of Croyland, in *Rer. Angl. Script.*, vol. i. p. 520.

his seven wives, roosted on a perch in the hall, and the swine ensconced themselves on the floor. As in the ploughman's home, the smoke of the fire had to find its way through the crevices of the roof; and the poet tells us that—

“ Well sooty was her bowre and eke her halle,  
In whiche she ete many a slender mele.  
Of poinant sawce ne knew she never a dele.  
No decente morsel passed through hir throughte,  
Hire diet was according to her cote.”

But although it was late before comfort warmed by her presence the abodes of the humbler class; or that the tastes and habits of the people became sufficiently improved, to lead them to appreciate those enjoyments,

Increase of  
Domestic Com-  
fort at the close  
of the Fifteenth  
Century.

which were slowly entering within the circle of their means; the domestic manners of the higher class at the close of the fifteenth century, underwent great changes and improvements. Literature, art, and commerce, refined the feelings; created new wants; invented new comforts; and poured into the homes of luxury and wealth, the products of far distant climes. The increase of population, and the rapid growth in importance of the trading class, invaded the isolation of the baronial mansion. The buttery was no longer dependent upon the annual fair for its choicest provender; nor was it longer needful, that any lord should retain a company of mechanics, to manufacture the rude utensils necessary for the household, and the implements for the manorial farm. Almost every English village had its carpenters, its masons, its smiths, and its dyers; and every town its shops and trading booths, which dis-

played on their stalls an array of the richest silks and tissues; spices, fruits, and aromatics from "over seas;" furniture newly imported from Flanders, and the woollen stuffs and warm broadcloths of Kendal and Brabant. Amidst these growing changes, my lord was less content with the scant and cheerless apparel of his ancient home, and whilst engrossed with the fortunes of the Roses, and still devoted to his hawks and hounds, he would yet pay some regard to the improvement of his mansion, and to the fashion of his household gear; would replace the broken lattice with fair windows of glass; introduce chimneys to carry off the smoke from his chamber fires; abolish the straw-pallet for a feather-bed, and decide with some degree of taste upon the garnish of his plate. His table boasted of choicer viands and more artistic cookery; from his buttery-hatch was dispensed new ale that sparkled in the sapling-cup<sup>b</sup>; and the maltsters and brewers of the neighbouring village had so improved upon the thick and glutinous liquor which had been the joy of his ancestors, that the calling of the "bruwyfe" was fast dying out of request. If his cellar lacked a store of claret or garnarde, he could purchase from the vintner for four silver pennies a bottle of the choicest wine, with which to make merry with his friends: if some of the wines of ancient vintage were no longer in esteem, new and stronger liquors had come into fashion; and when he visited London, my lord could send as an acceptable present to my lady in the country, a sealed pot of Geneva

<sup>b</sup> A sapling-cup belonging to Miss Ffarington of Worden Hall, Lancashire, is described in *Arch. Journal*, viii. 427.

cordial, or a bottle of *eau de vie*, sworn by the vendor to be genuine, and stamped with the merchant's mark<sup>c</sup>. My lady living far from the metropolis, who had hitherto been dependent upon the pack of the itinerant trader for her finery, was now no longer a marvel to her fashionable relatives in London, by the guise of her kirtle, or the antiquity of her head-gear; made perhaps, after patterns which the domestic tailor had copied since the days of her grandame; she could purchase from the neighbouring town her tawny silk and murrey-coloured taffeta, and send it to the city tailor, who would shape and garnish it after the latest caprice of fashion.

But these signs of progress were but the precursors of still greater changes, which the manners and customs of home were to undergo in the succeeding century, when national prosperity so increased the social and domestic comforts of the people, that old writers of the Tudor age seem themselves scarcely able to credit the accelerated speed with which society was advancing. Yet, by the middle class, and especially by English yeomen as late as the period of the Reformation, improvement was regarded with the keenest jealousy. New comforts were temptations, and luxuries however homely, were snares to be scrupulously avoided. Every English yeoman deemed it his duty to maintain the old English character, the prevailing element in which, was a reverence for things ancient, and a contempt for "new fangled" notions. It availed nothing, that the younger branches urged

Domestic Character of the English Yeoman in the days of the Tudors.

<sup>c</sup> Paston Letters, vol. iv. p. 264. John Paston buys "iij. trecele pottes of Geane."

the superiority, or the greater cleanliness of recent contrivances, over the rude and cheerless appliances of home; the all conclusive argument of the sire was, that such luxuries were unknown among people of their estate in the old days of his youth: he could not foresee, that in the progress of society, and by the silent triumphs of peace, the class to which he belonged, would eventually ascend to a degree of home comfort and refinement, then unknown even in the palaces of the king. Had he foreseen it, probably he would not have rejoiced; for the pride of a yeoman in the days of the Tudors, was to retain inviolate all the circumstances and usages of his home. Even the amusements of his family were consecrated by antiquity. "Rock-Monday, and the wake in summer, shroving, the wakeful catches on Christmas-eve, the hoky, or seed-cake, these he yearly kept in celebration, yet held them no relics of popery." His furniture were heirlooms; the treasured mementoes of his family history. The quaint old wills of the age proclaim the fondness and reverence with which he regarded them; because this chair was the one in which his father had sat at table, or because that fancy counterpane was once his mother's, he left it to his dearest friend or to his nearest kin. In the same painted chamber, on the same quaint old bedstead, the successive masters of that honourable house for generation after generation had slept and died. The hangings were yet more valuable for their tarnished beauty; innovation was sacrilege to his affections, and tempting indeed must have been the fashion or the luxury from "over seas," that could induce him to discard the faded glory of his Gothic home.

Love of  
Household  
Treasures.

Commerce, however, was overwhelming these conservative feelings by the diversity and splendour of her importations. The workshops of France, of Spain, and of Holland, sent their choicest efforts, and contributed more to the comfort of our home, than to the homes of their respective countries. The wealth and generosity of England was felt throughout Europe; and the fashion, which still lingers amongst us, of desiring the possession of articles of foreign workmanship, was then becoming strongly prevalent. The

Foreign Im-  
portations. rich stuffs of Arras, the satins of Bruges, the spotless fabrics of Damascus, the woods of Austria and Cyprus, the furniture of Spain and Flanders, the carpets of Turkey, and the glass and earthenware of Italy; adorned in profusion the palaces of Henry and Elizabeth, to the almost total exclusion of the productions of our own mechanics.

The style of architecture introduced at this period also afforded more scope for the introduction of home comforts. In domestic buildings of the reign of Henry and Elizabeth, beauty and ornament in detail were only retained so long as they did not present too great a sacrifice to convenience; and while in their internal arrangement, they retained many of the features of older edifices, they were distinctly marked by the introduction of many apartments, indicative of increasing wants and more refined feelings. The

Home no  
longer a Castle. mansion was less regarded as a castle than as a home. The gateway, with oriel windows and castellated roof, was often the only feature of embattled strength; the groups of ornamented chimneys, and the wide expanse of fair glass windows, were indicative of progressive comfort; although in the latter

particular, the architects of the sixteenth century appear to have made a transition from the narrow loophole of the Gothic, to an almost painful extreme of glaring light, seldom relieved by any of that beautiful tracery, or brilliant colouring, which had adorned the smaller but rarer windows of the earlier age. The grim array of halberds and corslets, of gauntlets and faulchions, in the interior, still betokened the love of a warlike calling, and that pride of chivalry, which lingered among our ancestors even when its ancient glory had faded. But other, and more gentle adornments, indicative of peaceful tastes, were creeping into fashion: the limnings of early painters on the walls; the viol and the lute; the bough-pots smiling with their floral beauties on the sunny window-sill, and a few quaint pioneers of our national literature in parchment and black-letter, lying humbly here and there; bespoke of new tastes, and new powers, working quietly in the homes of men, and preparing the world for greater changes and nobler aims, than were ever won by the halberds and the faulchions of old.

One of the favourite domestic institutions of the Tudor period was the banquet, which became so fashionable as to create important changes in the architectural arrangements of home. The great hall, no longer upheld with feudal dignity, and no longer the favourite resort of fashion, was in new erections divested of its ancient importance, and merely formed the stately approach to a wide and decorated staircase, which led to sumptuous banqueting-rooms, and endless galleries on the upper floor; in which were celebrated those magnificent entertainments which far surpassed all the festive wonders

of the Gothic age. The banqueting tables of the sixteenth century were fairy scenes: all the glittering treasures of the buffet were crowded in rich profusion on the board, which, mingling with

The Banquet  
in the Tudor  
Age.

“Conserves and marchpanes made in sundry shapes,  
As castles, towers, horses, bears and apes,”—

with rare wines and luscious fruits, and animated with the smiles of beauty and the charms of wit, formed marvellous pageantries; that realized, in Hampton Court and old Westminster Hall, the grandest dreams of romance.

These entertainments were rendered still more attractive by the mummings and maskings with which they were enlivened; by the merry and conceited jests of the domestic fool, who since the days of William the Conqueror had been an important personage in all great households; and by the care with which every dish and every article on the table was made conducive, by their grotesque design, to the disport and merriment of the guests. At a banquet given by Henry VII. in Westminster Hall, huge castles, borne on the backs of men, hidden within sweetmeat walls, moved about the great hall; they had towers with many windows, out of which looked fair young damsels, who were singing sweetly a song of welcome<sup>d</sup>: and at the famous banquet given by Cardinal Wolsey at Hampton Court, there were, says Cavendish, “Castles with images in the same; Paul’s Church and steeple in proportion for the quantity, as well counterfeited as the painter

The Banquet  
in Westminster  
Hall and  
Hampton  
Court.

<sup>d</sup> MS. in College of Arms, marked 1st M. 13, fol. 64.

should have painted it upon a cloth or wall. There were beasts, birds, fowls of divers kinds, and personages, most lively made and counterfeit in dishes; some, fighting as it were with swords, some with guns and crossbows; some vaulting and leaping; some dancing with ladies; some in complete harness justing with spears; and with many more devices than I am able with my wit to describe."

It was not always that the feast of sweets was held in the spacious hall; a temporary erection of timber was often provided for the purpose<sup>e</sup>. At an entertainment given to the commissioners sent by the Duke of Anjou, with proposals of marriage to Queen Elizabeth, a banqueting-house of wood was built at a cost of £1,750. In summer time, bowers were constructed amidst the flower-beds of the garden, of boughs and trellis-work of honeysuckles and jessamine,—

"Swete and fresshe lyke a paradyse."

Henry VIII. ordered an arbour to be made at Baynard Castle<sup>f</sup>. In the park at Windsor, Elizabeth of York commanded one to be erected in which a banquet was spread for the queen<sup>g</sup>; and Henry VIII. would often steal away from the glittering splendour of the royal hall, to sup with some new beauty in his garden bower<sup>h</sup>.

The fruits that graced the early banqueting-tables were more varied than has generally been supposed. We

<sup>e</sup> As late as 1632 the carpenters argued that it was their privilege to undertake the making of "banquetting howses and arbours of timber boards."—(*Jupp's Hist. Carpenters' Company*, p. 301.)

<sup>f</sup> MS. Addit., 7,099, fol. 75.

<sup>g</sup> Privy Purse Expenses, p. 31.

<sup>h</sup> MS. Addit., 10,109, fol. 194.

throw together a few notes on the dessert which may  
 The Dessert. not be altogether uninteresting<sup>i</sup>. Apples and pears in choice varieties are mentioned at a very early period; it is said that the severe season of 1257 almost destroyed them, and pears became exceedingly scarce; in 1327, Lord Berkeley sent a dish of pears to his mother-in-law as a new fruit<sup>k</sup>,—*pro novitate fructus*. Medlars are mentioned in the thirteenth century, and Chaucer alludes to them as being eaten in a state of decay. Cherries grew in Holborn in the same century; Henry III. ordered them to be planted at Westminster<sup>l</sup>; and Giles de Andenard, the royal gardener in the reign of Edward I., also planted some cherry-trees in the same garden<sup>m</sup>. Matthew Paris records that they were unproductive in the season of 1257. Twenty cherry trees were newly planted in the king's garden at Chelsea in the time of Henry VIII.<sup>n</sup>, at which period Mr. Loudon considered that their culture was introduced; but at no period subsequent to the Conquest were the tables of our English home without them. Quinces, plums, peaches, gooseberries, and mulberries, sometimes called "pynes," were grown in English gardens from the early part of the thirteenth century. A more delicate and much rarer fruit was the strawberry, which, although growing wild in England from an early period, was seldom cultivated except by a few horticultural churchmen: in some of the mo-

<sup>i</sup> Mr. Turner, in vol. i. of "Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages," has given some valuable information on this subject to which I am much indebted.

<sup>k</sup> Fosbroke's Berkeley Family, p. 133.

<sup>l</sup> Lib. Rot., 23 Hen. III., m. 15.

<sup>m</sup> Pip. Rot., 5 Edw. I.

<sup>n</sup> Rot. Reg. in Brit. Mus., 14, B. iv. a.

nastic and episcopal gardens they reached a goodly size, and improved vastly in flavour. Who, reverting to history for strawberry seasons, does not recall that terrible 13th of June, 1483, when Richard Duke of Gloucester, riding to the Tower, espied through the hedgerows in Holborn the rich berries in my lord of Ely's garden. We see him enter the council chamber, where, although yet wanting three hours to noon, the lords were met for business, and then in a portentous merry mood, flattering his Grace of Ely, praising his strawberries, and begging his lordship to send for a dish of the luscious fruit, saying, that he had never seen such fine strawberries as those that grew in Holborn. We see the Bishop all smiles, hurrying from the chamber to obey the Protector, little dreaming that the fame of his strawberries would be handed down to posterity associated with one of the blackest deeds of Richard III.

In the time of Lydgate, strawberries were sold about the streets in "pottles," but they were the wild berries of the wood. When first in season, they were brought by peasants to the wealthy, who appeared in general amiably disposed to bestow their rewards for these homely offerings. Henry VII. gave 3s. 8d. to some peasants who brought him strawberries°. Cardinal Wolsey was fond of a dish of strawberries; and as early as 1509 we find him regaling with the lords of the Star Chamber off "strawberries and cream<sup>p</sup>,"—a delicacy, the introduction of which is perhaps due to that luxurious prelate.

Strawberries  
and Cream.

° MS. Addit., 7,099, fol. 16.

<sup>p</sup> MS. Lansdown, I. fol. 118. a. In the Household Expenses of the Prior

Many choice fruits from "over seas" also appeared Foreign Fruits. on the early banqueting-table. Almonds, raisins, and figs were obtained from the spice merchants, who in the thirteenth century imported them from Italy and Spain. Henry III. ordered the Sheriff of London to obtain for Eleanor his cousin, one frail of figs and another of almonds<sup>q</sup>. Oranges were probably unknown to Europe previous to the twelfth century. Le Grand could find no trace of their introduction into France before the year 1333<sup>r</sup>. According to Professor Targioni, they were introduced from Arabia, were cultivated at Seville at the end of the twelfth century, and at Palermo in the thirteenth<sup>s</sup>. This is borne out by the fact, that in 1290, a large Spanish ship came to Portsmouth, from the cargo of which, there were purchased for Queen Eleanor, who in her native land had been used to such luxuries, figs, raisins, dates, pomegranates, citrons, and oranges, *pomæ de Orange*<sup>t</sup>. The English knights who joined the Crusades tasted for the first time many of these fruits in the gardens of Palestine. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries oranges were comparatively cheap in England. In 1480 ten oranges were sold for a penny<sup>u</sup>. In the time of Henry VIII. they were made into pies<sup>x</sup>, or the juice was squeezed out, sweetened, and mixed with wine. Among

of Dunmow, 26 Henry VIII., we find an entry of fourpence for "creem and strawberries."—(*MS. Addit.*, 20,021, fol. 20. a.) In 1549 a pottle of strawberries cost tenpence, at which period they were cultivated to much perfection. (*MS. Cottonian*, Vesp. F. xvi. fol. 8. a.)

<sup>q</sup> Rot. Claus., 13 Nov., 8 Henry III.

<sup>r</sup> Vie Privée, i. 246.

<sup>s</sup> Journal of Horticultural Society, vol. ix. p. 173.

<sup>t</sup> MS. in the

Tower, quoted by Mr. Turner.

<sup>u</sup> Howard's Household Exp., p. 32.

<sup>x</sup> Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VIII., pp. 32, 205.

the jewels of Queen Elizabeth we find "strainers of silver guilte for to presse oranges<sup>y</sup>." These facts sufficiently disprove the supposition that Sir Thomas Gresham was the first merchant who introduced oranges into England<sup>z</sup>. Marmalade, Indian preserves, and green ginger were sold by the grocers of the fifteenth century. An old writer of that age says,—

"Loke then, my chylde, ye have at dewe sesons,  
Butter, cheese, datys, grapys, fygyes and reysons,  
Appullys, plemes, composts, grene gynger," &c.<sup>a</sup>

Almonds were in high esteem, and extensively used by all good Catholics; they were cultivated in England during the middle ages, and large quantities were imported from the South of Europe. They were used in various ways in mediæval cookery: they were boiled until the liquor became a delicious cream, from which was made the famous butter of almonds<sup>b</sup>, and which even rigid disciplinarians ventured to eat when common butter was not allowed: it became a favourite Easter present. The custards of old England were made of almond-pulp flavoured with spice, and proved pleasant dainties for fasting days; the Puritans, however, of a later period, looking upon them as Popish, banished them from the table, along with mince-pies and plum-porridge.

The banqueting stuff, as these fruits and dainties were called, were spread out on painted trenchers and "poesie roundels." A set of twelve trenchers, exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries by Colonel Sykes, had on each a verse, de-

Painted  
Trenchers  
and "Poesie  
Roundels."

<sup>y</sup> MS. Harl., 1,650, fol. 129. a.    <sup>z</sup> This was the reason that Anthony More painted him with an orange in his hand.—(*Passavant*, i. 189.)

<sup>a</sup> MS. Sloane, 1,315, fol. 3. a.

<sup>b</sup> For a receipt, see MS. Sloane, 1,986, p. 62.

scriptive of one of the twelve following characters:—the courtier, divine, soldier, lawyer, physician, merchant, country gentleman, bachelor, married man, wife, widow, and the maid<sup>c</sup>. In the “*Art of Englishe Poesie*” we are told that it was usual to put such verses on “banquetting dishes,” and to paint them on “the back sides of fruit trenchors of wood.”

When china was first imported into this country, it was used at the banquet. Porcelain was probably quite unknown to Europe previous to the Crusades; nor did that event lead to its immediate introduction. Marco Polo, says Robertson, is the first among the moderns who mentions it. Some few specimens of Oriental pottery may have found their way into the palaces of European monarchs. The queen of Charles le Bel, who died in 1370, had a pot of porcelain among her treasures, but it would be difficult to find similar entries previous to the sixteenth century. The Portuguese began to import it soon after their first voyage to China in 1517, but it was long before it became an important article of commerce. Even in the time of Elizabeth its value and rarity were so great, that Burghlëy and Cecil presented a porringer and a cup of that costly ware, as a suitable new-year’s gift to the Queen<sup>d</sup>. China dishes are mentioned by Shakespere, but they were probably the painted pottery of Italy, a knowledge of the manufacture of which, the Italians

Introduction  
of Porcelain.

Italian Ware,  
or Majolica.

<sup>c</sup> The verses are printed in a rare volume entitled, “*The XII Wonders of the Worlde, set and composed for the Viall de Gambo, by I. Maynard,*” fol. 1,611. <sup>d</sup> Nich. Progress, ii. 528. Even as late as 1635 the Dutch presented to Charles I. two large basins of China earth. —(*Lestrange’s Charles I.*, p. 136.)

gained at an early period from the Moors in the island of Majorca. This ware, which the recent exhibition of art treasures has made familiar to us, became in the sixteenth century highly appreciated. Majolica dishes were every day more in request; their price was too costly for their use to become general, but housewives strained a point, to purchase a piece of majolica as an ornament for their cupboard. This ware in old inventories is usually called china metal. In the closets of Henry VIII. were many articles of "china earth." Thus we read of "bolles," potingers, assay-cups, ewers, platters, saucers, and spice-plates, all "of earthe," and many of them described as of "gally makynge<sup>e</sup>." There were also green plates of earth for spice and fruit, and "divers conceites for a banquette, made of earthe," which were china ornaments for garnishing the table.

In the sixteenth century, the introduction of the beautiful glass wares of Venice, also added additional lustre and elegance to the banquetting-table. Modelled after the forms of antiquity, garnished with diaper-work and filigree, with golden spangles and coloured threads, they became universally admired by fashion. A list of the glass belonging to Henry VIII. has been preserved; it is curious and abundant. Flagons, goblets, standing-cups, spice-plates, dishes, sconces, and candlesticks of coloured, gilded, and white glass, were in the royal glass-house at Westminster<sup>f</sup>. Many of these articles were made abroad expressly

*The Venice  
Glasses.*

<sup>e</sup> MS. Harl., 1,419, ff. 145, 146, 150.

<sup>f</sup> Ibid., ff. 143—150. Glass bottles were at this period more generally introduced, and for their better preservation the cellaret was invented.

for the English monarch, being elaborately painted or diapered with the royal arms and initials; they are described as of Venice make or of "galley" fashion. Down to the close of the seventeenth century Venice supplied us with drinking-glasses, and our dealers chose their stocks from patterns sent over to England by the Venetian manufacturers<sup>g</sup>. In the reign of Elizabeth, "certain glass-makers did covenant with Anthony Dollyne and John Carye," of the Low Countries, to come and make glass in England. They obtained a patent on condition of instructing the English in the art. This was about the year 1589<sup>h</sup>, at which period glass was in high request as "banket gear." At an entertainment given by the Earl of Hertford to Queen Elizabeth in 1591, the dessert was carried out of the gallery into the garden by two hundred gentlemen. There were a thousand dishes, all of glass or silver<sup>i</sup>. Articles of glass were among the treasures of the household, and kept by good housewives for high days and holidays. In the "Queen of Corinth" we read of

"Those glasses I set by for high days<sup>k</sup>."

When their use became more general they were the ornament of the sideboard. Fuller says, that the extravagant displayed glass on the cupboard, when plate, the principal, is otherwise disposed of<sup>l</sup>.

A royal warrant of the time of James I. (1613) orders the delivery of "a seller of bottles coured w<sup>h</sup> Spanish leather and gilt" for the service of Prince Charles.—(*MS. Additional*, 5,751.) A curious "seller for glasses" is described as in the "sweetmeate closset" of Lettice, Countess of Leicester, in 1635.—(*Additional Roll in Brit. Mus.*, 18,985.)

<sup>g</sup> MS. Additional, 855.

<sup>h</sup> MS. Lansdown, 59, art. 72.

<sup>i</sup> Nichols's *Progresses*, vol. ii.

<sup>k</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher,

vol. vi. p. 215.

<sup>l</sup> *Pisgah View*, p. 7.

But whilst the banquet with its attractive auxiliaries gave a character and magnificence to the domestic entertainments of the Tudor age, the simplicity of ancient times was still retained in many of the customs and appliances of home. Even the floors of the banqueting-halls and ball-rooms were covered with rushes; for Shakespere says, that

. . . . . "Wantons light of heart  
Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels."

If the owner could boast of a carpet, it was reserved for the chamber or the parlour. Rushes not only allayed the dust, but served as a token of respect. "Are the rushes strewed?" asks Grumio, when expecting the arrival of Petruchio and his bride. On the floor were spread new rushes when guests were invited. It was an old joke among the wits of the Elizabethan age, that many strewed green rushes for strangers, who would not give a straw for a friend. To cover the floor, indeed, was deemed so necessary a point of courtesy, that when not performed it was said that the host did not care a rush or a straw for his guest: hence the origin of an expression common now. The use of these homely materials pervaded all classes: even the hall of the virgin Queen, according to Hentzner, was strewed with straw. Among the middle class this custom prevailed at a much later period, and the welcome associated by time-honoured usage with the strewing of rushes, retarded the general introduction of carpets. Many retained the use of the homely herbage whose wealth placed the looms of Italy at their disposal. Carpets, however, which during the middle ages were rarely found except in the homes of royalty, were

Strewing  
Rushes for  
Company.

gradually becoming less expensive. Beaumont and Fletcher's coxcomb does not forget, among the luxuries with which he would have his house arranged, to specify the "Turkey carpets;" the use of which was so opposed to the habits of the people, that they were as yet regarded as luxurious and foppish. Carpets of "Torquey makynge" and carpets of silk, covered, many of them, with beads and gems, were among the household treasures of Henry VIII. His Highness just before his death purchased of Lawrence Warren, merchant, "a very faire carpet." It was the most sumptuous "tapet" in the royal household, being embroidered with venrie gold and trails of pearls on a groundwork of crimson satin; it was edged with a deep border of gold and roses of pearls, and lined with green silk<sup>m</sup>. Many of these beautiful carpets were the productions of English embroiderers. Carpets of "Inglisshe making" occur in Tudor inventories<sup>n</sup>; one of needlework of gold, silver, and silk, is described as wrought with roses of red and white, and "Queene Anne's siphyres, w<sup>t</sup> a bordre abowte the same of honysocles and acornes;" the ends were deeply fringed with gold and silver, and the whole was lined with green damask; but this carpet was only three yards in length, and "two yards scante" in breadth<sup>o</sup>. It was seldom that the carpets of the period exceeded these dimensions, being only occasionally used for spreading before the principal seat, the bottom shelf of the cupboard, or the floor of the great bay-window. It is rarely that we find these "foppish luxuries" of

Turkey  
Carpets.

<sup>m</sup> MS. Harleian, 1,419, fol. 25. b.  
Hengrave, p. 28.

<sup>n</sup> Ibid., fol. 16. a; Gage's

<sup>o</sup> MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 29. b.

fashion among the household chattels of the Tudor age. The tapestries that warmed and decorated our English home in the days of Henry and Elizabeth, were both rich and abundant. Storied with historical and Scripture subjects, wrought in silk and venrie gold,—

The Tudor  
Tapestries.

. . . . . “ The walls yclothed were  
With goodly arras, of great majesty,  
Woven with gold and silke, so close and nere  
That the rich metall lurked privily,  
As faining to be hid from envious eye ;  
Yet here, and there, and everywhere unawares  
It shew’d itselfe, and shone unwillingly ;  
Like a discolored snake, whose hidden snares

Through the greene gras his long bright burnish’d back declares<sup>p</sup>.”

These hangings were marked by a vast improvement upon the tapestries of the Gothic age, by the efforts of genius displayed in their designs, by the more correct proportions, and by the juster rules of perspective, observed in the various objects represented in the scene. Scripture, and our national history, were the favourite subjects in English homes, whilst continental fashion favoured those tapestries on which were delineated scenes from ancient mythology, or the loves recorded by the romancers of old. The wardrobe at Hampton Court contained five hundred pieces of hangings, which embraced a vast range of subjects, and familiarized the most notable events of history ; the other palaces of Henry VIII. were as abundantly supplied. These treasures are enumerated in documents, which describe them with a minuteness that delights the antiquary, and the curious may still see remnants of these home-

<sup>p</sup> Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, b. iii. canto ix.

decorations in the hall at Hampton Court. The history of Abraham, "of which the world," says Evelyn<sup>q</sup>, "could shew nothing nobler of the kind," was probably designed by Bernard Van Orlay, the disciple of Raffaele, and was the gift of Francis I. to Henry VIII. The great poet of the age of which we are speaking often alludes to these domestic embellishments, which gives an interest to the subject, and associates these ancient tapestries with history. The arras must have been hung in goodly folds to allow the portly Falstaff to ensconce himself behind it<sup>r</sup>. Prince Henry told that redoubted knight to hide behind the arras, when the sheriff and the watch sought him at the "Boar's Head<sup>s</sup>." "I whipt me behind the arras, and there heard it agreed upon," says Borachio, when he unfolded the vile plot against poor Hero's fame<sup>t</sup>. These were rare coverts for the merry games of youth, glorious conveniences for hide-and-seek and blind-man's buff; but they were also the lurking-places of eavesdroppers, and even murderers would avail themselves of these recesses. Hubert stationed the instrument of his cruelty to Prince Arthur "within the arras<sup>u</sup>." Polonius hid himself behind the hangings of the queen's chamber, and there met his death<sup>x</sup>. In history we read that Pescara stationed Antonio de Leyra behind the tapestry, that he might hear the Chancellor Moroné develop the plot against the Emperor Charles V.<sup>y</sup>

Scenes behind  
the Arras.

<sup>q</sup> Evelyn Mem., p. 45.

<sup>r</sup> Merry Wives of Windsor.

<sup>s</sup> Henry IV., pt. i. act ii. sc. 4.

<sup>t</sup> Much Ado about Nothing, act i. sc. 2.

<sup>u</sup> King John, act iv. sc. 1.

<sup>x</sup> Hamlet, act iii. sc. 4.

<sup>y</sup> Robertson's Life of Charles V., b. iv.

We may notice the manufacture of English tapestry, which was carried on with some proficiency at this period, but at so great a cost, and to such a limited extent, that it can scarcely be said to have rendered such luxuries more easily attainable. The art of arras-making was perhaps first introduced into England by William Sheldon in the reign of Henry VIII.; and James I. so far encouraged this new branch of industry, as to advance £2,000 towards the establishment of a manufactory, which was erected by Sir Francis Crane at Mortlake, in Surrey. Cleyn the artist was invited from Denmark by the King to paint new patterns, and his historical and grotesque designs became universally admired, while their novelty lent a charm to the productions of the English arras-weavers. This enterprise was liberally patronised: the palaces of Charles I. were enriched by the choicest efforts of the new establishment; and that monarch, in the first year of his reign, when beautifying his kingly home with the treasures of art, purchased three suits of golden tapestry of Sir Francis Crane for £6,000, and encouraged the knightly weaver with a grant of £2,000 yearly, "for ten years to come," for the better maintenance of the "worke of tapestries<sup>z</sup>."

The furniture of the Tudor period is celebrated for its Gothic richness, and for the taste and ingenuity displayed in its adornment. The new style of art known as the Renaissance, had diffused a taste for the pure

<sup>z</sup> Rymer, *Fœdera*, xviii. p. 60. On the death of Sir Francis, the manufactory was sold to the King by Sir Richard Crane; being royal property, it was seized and despoiled during the Civil War. Charles II. made some effort to restore it, and employed Verrio to make designs, but the project was soon abandoned.

designs, and correct models of antiquity. Genius, too, in those days aimed to be useful, and the *petits-maîtres*, the pupils and imitators of Albert Durer, thought it no degradation to their beloved art, to engrave with patient care designs for the decoration of a pair of dog-irons, a new handle for the parlour fire-tongs, or, indeed, to improve by their refined taste, the plate, the household furniture, and even the meanest objects used in the economy of home. The bedding was wrought after the paintings of Venetian artists; Raffaele, in his early days, did not, it is said, disdain to apply his talent to the decoration of majolica; and in his riper years, he designed the celebrated cartoons at Hampton Court, as patterns for the arras-weavers. Many of the art-treasures of home, described in the Leiger-books of Henry VIII., and yet preserved in the once busy haunts of his majesty, were made by mechanics, most experienced in their craft, from designs by Holbein and other eminent artists of the day.

We mark the progress of decorative art as applied to household-furniture in the tables of the period. The large massive tables, often elaborately carved, and “dormant in the hall alway,” were a great improvement upon the rough boards and trestles which had satisfied so many generations of our ancestors. Those in the parlours and withdrawing-rooms of Greenwich and Hampton Court, were scarcely surpassed in the luxurious age of Louis XIV., which was pre-eminently the age of decorative furniture. In the Harleian Inventory are described tables “fynelye wroughte withe sondrye coloured wooddes,” or “peced withe smalle peces of brasse and sundrye woodes;” and

Home adorned  
by Genius.

Tables inlaid  
with Parquet-  
terie.

two large square tables of "great beauty were wrought in similar parqueterie, each "havinge nyne lyddes to open, and within everye lydde sondrye devyses carved in whyte wood sette forthe with coolers of blewe and silver<sup>a</sup>."

Instead of the rough formal benches so long in use, buffet-stools "of joyner worke," with cushions covered with stuff,—ranging in quality from the homely say, to Utrecht velvet,—were introduced as table-seats. Sir John Harrington says, that many of the merchants had in their halls "easye quilted and lyned formes and stools<sup>b</sup>." Unimportant as the new fashion may appear, it gave rise to many old customs and social usages, which lent fresh attractions to home. Heywood said that a good table was never without good stools<sup>c</sup>, because when they "drew the stools," and formed a home circle around the fire, the most cheerful season of the domestic entertainment commenced; the little grates, or "cradles of iron," were placed over the fire, and a merry scramble for hot codlings and roasted chestnuts gave the charm of hilarity to those happy moments.

The Buffet-stools of "Joyners' work."

The chairs of this period are remarkable, as presenting many interesting examples of the Renaissance style of decorative art. The frescoes of Raffaele and his disciples, em-

Chairs with "Anticke," or "Romayne" work.

<sup>a</sup> MS. Harl., 1,419, ff. 137, 183.

<sup>b</sup> Nugæ, i. 202. We often find buffet-forms and stools in wills and household inventories of the Tudor period. In the hall of Thomas Middleton, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, were two "buffet formes." In that of John Wicliff, in 1562, "buffet stoles of joyner worke;" and in Sizergh Hall, in 1569, were a dozen "buffet stoles."—(*Wills and Inventories*, vol. ii. pp. 162—221.)

<sup>c</sup> Old Plays, vol. vi. p. 119. See also Euphenes his History, in the dedication.

bracing the standard ornaments of antiquity, were liberally applied to their adornment, and designated in old English inventories as “anticke or Romaine” work. But the chairs in use at this period were principally imported from the Continent; and the Italian, the Spanish, and Flanders chairs, have each features characteristic of the school to which they belong. Pre-

Venetian  
Chairs.

eminently must stand the chairs of Venice, which, although rarely brought into England, were occasionally found in the mansions of the nobility. They were richly carved, and mostly “parcel gilt,” the burnished surfaces presenting a rich contrast to the dark-grained wood. The seats were solid, and were seldom, like the Spanish chairs, stuffed and covered with velvet. Those with elbows and straight high backs were the favourites of the withdrawing-room. The chairs in the palaces of the Tudors were very rich; some were covered with satin, with Utrecht velvet, or with cloth of gold, “raysted” with crimson velvet, fringed with Venice gold and silk, garnished with bullion-headed nails, and having the four pommels burnished with gold, and the royal arms painted on the backs; some were of walnut-tree, with “antique worke parcell gylte;” others were covered with plate of silver-gilt, “bossed” with mottoes and cardinals’ hats, and in the pommels the “king’s armes with a differens, and a cardinall’s hatte on the saide armes;” and some, again, are curiously described as having little steel mirrors set in the backs, for the convenience of the ladies<sup>d</sup>. We not only read of “chayres of tymbre,” Chairs of Iron. but also of “chaires of iron, covered with

<sup>d</sup> MS. Harl., 1,419, ff. 10, 18, 40, 368. 395.

blewe vellet.” The apartments of Katherine of Aragon were furnished with several “chayres of iron, everye of them covered with crymsene cloth of tissue, fringed with red silk and Venysse golde, having two gilte pomellis,” and ornamented with curious iron-work<sup>e</sup>.

The large oaken chairs in less luxurious homes were destitute of these adornments, but it was the custom to cushion them with pillows of lavender, and to scour the wood with the juice of sweet marjoram or lemontine. In the parlour or withdrawing-room the chairs were seats of honour, and represented The Chairs of Order. the dais in the hall. There were seldom more than two chairs in an apartment; the rest of the seats were stools. One of the chairs was the master’s seat; the other was for his principal guest. To take the chair, even in private life, therefore, implied something more than common civility. These seats were called “chairs of order:”—

“The several chairs of order look your scour,  
With juice of balm, and every precious flower<sup>f</sup>.”

In the royal palaces and in extensive mansions, a traverse sometimes protected the principal The Traverse Chair. seat in the hall; this was a screen surrounded with curtains hung upon rails<sup>g</sup>. Portable traverses in the form of chairs were introduced in the sixteenth century, and were perhaps similar to the chair introduced by Sir Saunders Duncombe in 1634 from Sedan.

<sup>e</sup> MS. Regis, 7, F. xiv. art. 23. Iron furniture appears to have been fashionable at this period; Henry VIII. had not only iron chairs, but iron bedsteads and coffers.—(*MS. Harl.*, 1,419, ff. 22, 142.)

<sup>f</sup> Merry Wives of Windsor, act v. sc. 5.

<sup>g</sup> A representation of the traverse is given in MS. Harl., 2,278, fol.55. b.

Henry VIII. had "two chairs, called trauerses," in which he used to be carried "to and fro in his galleries and chambers." They were covered with tawny silk velvet, and quilted all over with tawny silk; they were supplied with footstools, and the tops of the two high pommels of the chairs were decorated with roses of "venerye golde, and fringed rounde aboute with tawney silke<sup>h</sup>."

The cabinets of the Tudor age were beautiful and artistic; some are described as covered with crimson velvet, garnished with passamaynes of Venice gold, relieved with filigree of copper gilt, and having little tills or drawers lined with satin of Bruges, for containing the hawk-bells, dog-whistles, bits and spurs. Among the furniture belonging to Henry VIII., we find a cupboard of walnut-tree, "mixed with sundrye coloured wooddes with this scripture, *Hu-militatem sequitur gloria*." There were others that had carved pillars, "garnished with dyvers carved images of beastes of white wood." Perhaps the most remarkable piece was one described as a "fayre large cabonett, covered with crimson vellet and copper gilt, with the king's armes crowned," having tills or drawers "within nyne leaves or dores, enameled with pictures of horse-men," with leaves to open, also covered with crimson velvet, and lined with green satin of Bruges<sup>i</sup>. These choice pieces of household furniture were for the parlours and privy chambers, while the huge massive court cupboard, or buffet, with its richly carved pillars, its quaint ambries with panelled doors, displaying to the fullest extent the beauties of

Cabinet-work  
of the Tudor  
Age.

The Court  
Cupboard, or  
Buffet.

<sup>h</sup> MS. Harl., 1,419, fol. 194.

<sup>i</sup> Ibid., fol. 182.

“anticke” or “Romayne” work, and the grotesque designs then so prevalent, was the greatest ornament and the most attractive feature in the Tudor hall; and by the plate arrayed on its shelves, not only bespoke the increase of personal wealth, but testified to the progress of art as applied to the elegancies of home. It astonished foreigners to behold the line of shops along the Strand and Cheapside, glittering with flagons and goblets, with salvers, alms-dishes, and ewers, all of massive gold and silver. There were fifty-two goldsmiths in the Strand alone, who displayed, as an Italian admits, an array of plate more magnificent than could be found in all the shops of Milan, Rome, Venice, and Florence put together<sup>k</sup>. Fashion in the sixteenth century wrought many changes in the goldsmith’s art, and those fine specimens of mediæval metal-work, that had been the glory of the baronial hall, and the richest ornaments of the festive board, were melted in the crucible. We cannot but regret the loss of those early examples described in ancient inventories, as adorned with all the beauties of Tricento art; but it is some consolation to know, that some were to re-appear in forms still more beautiful, and in designs far more artistic. Art, revived under the masters of the Renaissance school, displayed her happiest genius in adorning the metal-work of the sixteenth century. Not only were the subjects and types of their ornamentation modelled after the catholic taste of the ancients, but additional brilliancy was achieved by the re-introduction of enamelled colouring, —a taste for which had died out of fashion during the

<sup>k</sup> Relation of the Island of England, p. 42.

preceding century,—by damascene and filigree-work, by mosaics, and other kindred arts. A taste for this new style of ornament as applied to domestic purposes, met with liberal encouragement among the English nobility, and a spirit of emulation was created among the wealthy, not so much to crowd their buffets with an abundance of massive plate, as to possess the most delicate and elaborate works of genius. Henry VIII., who was proud of the magnificence of his plate, encouraged those arts that tended to its perfection. Vases, salts, and goblets were designed by Holbein<sup>1</sup>, and it is said that some masterpieces of Cellini—the presents perhaps of Francis I. on the Field of the Cloth of Gold—graced the royal sideboard. Many curious particulars relative to the style and ornamentation of the goldsmiths' work of this period, may be gleaned from old inventories and royal warrants. A taste for the Renaissance is everywhere observable. Basins, flagons<sup>m</sup>, pots, cups, and salts, are described as wrought with “anticke work,” to distinguish them from the Gothic. Thus we have standing cups garnished with antique, and dragons at the top: a bowl with “antique hedde, and the bottom chased with antique<sup>n</sup>.” Much of the plate belonging to Henry Duke of Suffolk was adorned with “paines of anticke worke<sup>o</sup>,” or strap-work decoration. Pots are described as “chased with panes.” The han-

<sup>1</sup> There is a book of designs for jewellery by Holbein in the British Museum. Inigo Jones had a book of drawings for goldsmiths' work, which he shewed to Sandrart.—(*Walpole's Anecdotes of Painting*, i. 153.)

<sup>m</sup> Flagons are often described as with “chaines and stopples.”—(*MS. Addit.*, 5,751, fol. 283.)

<sup>n</sup> *MS. Cottonian*, Appendix,

xxviii. fol. 39.

<sup>o</sup> *MS. Addit.*, 5,751, fol. 298.

dles of cups and flagons were in the form of antique or grotesque figures, and the pommels on the covers of spice plates and the great salts, were expressive models of ancient gods and cupids. Much of the plate was "pounced;" some gilt pots delivered for the use of the Princess Mary, in the time of Henry VIII., were "pounced with great wreathes." Many of the royal goblets were "pounced with arms:" standing cups were "pounced with wilde flowers," or with garlands about the covers, of "rooses and braunches<sup>p</sup>."

These beautiful modellings and arboresque chasings were rendered still more attractive by the enamelling with which they were mingled. Basins and ewers were enamelled with red and white roses, and many of these were the work of Flemish artizans. Thus, among a list of royal plate in 1547, we find a basin of parcel gilt, enamelled with the arms of England and Castile, described as of "Flaunders touche<sup>q</sup>." Among the new-year's gifts presented to Prince Edward, son of Henry VIII., were several pieces of plate enamelled with roses and arms. The Earl of Shrewsbury gave "a salt with the seller of byrall, enamelled blewe, with three ostrich feathers set in a coronet, and E. P. garnished and hanged in the top, with small pearls and the figure of a shepherd for a handle<sup>r</sup>." The quantity of plate displayed at entertainments and feastings appears almost incredible; but on these occasions, the noble, whose plate-chest was not equal to *Plate lending.* his pride, loaded his buffet with goblets and trenchers

<sup>p</sup> MS. Addit., 5,751, fol. 285; and MS. Cottonian, Appendix, xxviii. fol. 173.      <sup>q</sup> MS. Addit., 5,751, fol. 283.      <sup>r</sup> MS. Cottonian, Appendix, xxviii. fol. 39.

from the stores of the London goldsmiths. At the feasting of the High Constable of Castile by James I., the plate was supplied by John Williams the goldsmith, who charged sixpence an ounce for the damage done to the "fashion" during the King's use of it<sup>s</sup>. Lord Cobham, when he entertained Sir Walter Raleigh and his lady, hired a rich service of plate for the occasion<sup>t</sup>. It is evident that the nobles accommodated each other with the loan of the family plate. Edward VI. lent a large service to Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, the father of Lady Jane Grey<sup>u</sup>.

The court-cupboard on which these treasures were displayed needed protection. Cavendish, describing a banquet at Hampton Court, says that the cupboard was "barred in round about that no man might come nigh it;" the plate was designed for show, for none of it "was stirred during the feast." A body of yeomen, sometimes called buffetiers, and corrupted into beef-eaters, guarded the plate on the buffet in royal households. They were picked men of stalwart growth; and as they proudly followed the king in public, dressed in scarlet cloth of gold, their appearance favoured the popular notion that they were enormous consumers of beef. Their duties were not altogether superfluous; scarcely a feast was held but that goblets, salts, spoons, and even trenchers, mysteriously disappeared. At an entertainment given in 1604 by James I., in Somerset House, four pieces of plate, weighing eighty-seven ounces, were stolen; and we have a long list of service embezzled by "untrewe persons," at the feasts and ban-

The Show-plate guarded by Buffetiers.

Plate stolen by "untrewe" persons.

\* MS. Addit., 5,751, fol. 202.

\* Ibid., fol. 199.

<sup>u</sup> Ibid., 298.

quets given by Queen Elizabeth during the first eight years of her reign<sup>x</sup>.

But it was not always that nobles were served in silver gilt. The high board groaned beneath a prodigious weight of gold and silver, in the banqueting halls of Greenwich and York Place, but in the privacy of the Star Chamber, even the luxurious Wolsey and the noble Somerset, were content to hire a garnish of counterfeit vessels for the repast<sup>y</sup>; and merchant citizens polished trenchers that cost but "xii<sup>d</sup>. by the dozin." It must be owned that art had improved and beautified even these more humble manufactures. François Briot, in France, set an example which led to the ornamentation of our London garnish, which with the stone-ware of Flanders and Germany, formed a less costly, but not less attractive, show on the cupboard of the yeoman. The quaint china-ware of Delft was perhaps more highly prized than the metal, because a more recent introduction into English homes. Huge porringers and salad dishes, painted in strong colours, but without any of that elaboration of finish which distinguished the Italian majolica, were reared against the "disbink," or back-board of the cupboard. In the front, earthen pitchers of blue and white, and brightly polished pewter cups, were arranged with all the effect that homely taste could achieve. Standing foremost was a large jug

The Garnish  
of London  
Pewter.

<sup>x</sup> MS. Addit., 5,751, ff. 202, 207. The executors of the Earl of Devonshire were called upon to pay for plate lost out of the chamber appertaining to the office held by the Earl in the court of Queen Mary. —(*Ibid.*, fol. 204.) A royal warrant of James I., in the State Paper Office, orders a search to be made for plate stolen from his Majesty. —(*Sign Manuals*, vol. vi., No. 24.) <sup>y</sup> MS. Lansdown, No. 1, fol. 118.

called a Bellarmine, decorated with a bearded visage, wide pot belly and narrow neck, intended as a burlesque likeness of the famous Cardinal of that name. A cup, or a spice plate of Venice glass, was sometimes among the treasures; and the lower shelf was occupied with wooden bowls and trenchers, with gispins, with buttery tankards hooped with iron, and with black-jacks, or bombards<sup>z</sup>, which were articles for general household use. The bombards were made of leather, which, says an old writer, when the French saw, they represented on their return to the Continent, that the English drank their beer out of their boots<sup>a</sup>. The sideboard adorned with these various articles, and arranged in the most precise order, was the household glory of the thrifty matron, the pride of the young wife, and the souvenir of the aged grandame. On high days and holidays, and bonfire nights, the polish of the best pewter was dimmed by use, the china dishes were placed on the friendly board, piled up with sweetmeats and marchpanes, and the capacious bellarmine was filled to the brim with foaming ale of the good-wife's brewing.

Taste loved to decorate home with the simple charms of Flora. The sunny bow-windows were little conservatories. Exotics were rare, but the old-fashioned English flowers thrived amazingly in the posy-jars in the window. On Easter, or "God's Son-day," bough-pots of gilly-flowers and roses were placed on the chimney hearth. "Ye well

<sup>z</sup> Queen Elizabeth orders by a warrant two "leder potts" and a gispin to be delivered to the yeoman of the Running Wardrobe: and James I. ordered the delivery of "two black jackes and a gispin."—(*MS. Addit.*, 5,751, fol. 10.) <sup>a</sup> Philocothonista, quoted in *Old Plays*, vol. x. p. 287.

knowe," says an old author writing in 1511, "that it is the maner at this daye to do the fire out of the hall, and the black wynter brondes, and all thinges that is foule with fume and smoke shall be done awaye; and where the fire was, shall be gayly arrayed with fayre flowers, and strewed with green ryshes all aboute." After this spring cleaning, the apartments were perfumed, for it was the duty of a good housewife, not only to lay in a store of medicinal herbs, and by her knowledge of practical chemistry to distil sweet waters and oils with which to flavour her custards, but to extract in summer the scent of the garden flowers to sprinkle over the chamber floors from the casting bottle<sup>b</sup>. The simplicity of the early times was still retained in domestic habits. Ladies of rank made their own conserves, prepared their own bread, and even attended to the lighter duties of the washing-day. A countess did not think it beneath her dignity to clear-starch her own frills and ruffs; and the court ladies of Queen Elizabeth's time paid large fees to Mrs. Guelham and Madame Plasse to learn the art of starching, and the "seething of the starch."

Harrison, in his "Description of Britain," speaks of the vast improvement which was observable in his time in the homes of the middle classes. He was especially astonished at the luxurious "lodging" which commerce placed within the means of the people: "We ourselves," says he, "have lain full oft upon straw pallets covered onlie with a sheet, or rought mats, and a good rounde log under our

<sup>The "lodging" of Elizabeth's time.</sup>

<sup>b</sup> "A castinge bottel of blewse glasse."—(*MS. Harl.*, 1,419, fol. 145; *Unton Inventories*, p. 27.)

head instead of a bolster." A feather-bed was no longer a palace luxury: it was often a marriage gift, or the young wife sometimes brought it to her husband with her outfit. The best bed in the great chamber was generally "a brissel tick" filled with feathers; and tradesmen in the time of Elizabeth and James, often had two or three feather-beds in their household.

A ponderous four-post bedstead of ample dimensions was the solemn glory of a Tudor chamber. The Solemnities of the Great Bed. Its massive pillars, bulging out in knobs of the richest carving, sometimes a foot and a half in diameter<sup>c</sup>, towered to the ceiling, and bore a prodigious weight of selours, testers, vallances, and hangings, which cast gloom and shadows thick upon the bed: the top of each post was ornamented with a Cupid, the arms of the owner in metal-work, or with gilded vanes. One can understand how so many hallucinations arose in old time about haunted chambers, when we think of the solemnities of fly-bitten tapestries and grotesque carving with which the occupant of the "great bed" was encompassed. Griffins and monsters, frantic knights and distressed damsels in needlework, clustered thick around him; satyrs, "anticke boys," and the wild creations of mediæval fancy, grinning hideously, were carved in fantastic confusion over the head-board, up the pillars, and around the deep cornices of the bedstead. We have abundant materials descriptive of the bedding in the Queen Elizabeth's Bed. royal household, but of all the Tudors none slept on such sumptuous beds as the Virgin Queen.

<sup>c</sup> MS. Harl., 1,419, ff. 45, 53; also Lysons' Mag. Brit., Derbyshire, p. 29.

A wardrobe warrant dated 1581, orders the delivery for the Queen's use of a bedstead of walnut-tree, richly carved, painted, and gilt. The selour, tester, and val-lance, were of cloth of silver, figured with velvet, lined with changeable taffeta, and deeply fringed with Venice gold, silver, and silk. The curtains were of costly tapestry, curiously and elaborately worked; every seam and every border laid with gold and silver lace, caught up with long loops and buttons of bullion. The head-piece was of crimson satin of Bruges, edged with a passamayne of crimson silk, and decorated with six ample plumes, containing seven dozen ostrich feathers of various colours, garnished with golden spangles. The counterpoint was of orange-coloured satin, quilted with cutwork of cloths of gold and silver, of satins of every imaginable tint, and embroidered with Venice gold, silver spangles and coloured silks, fringed to correspond, and lined with orange sarcenet. A royal patchwork indeed<sup>d</sup>!

The room in which stood the great bed was seldom occupied by the owner. Every home whose owner could afford to be hospitable, had a guests' chamber, in which the best hangings, the best furniture, and the best bed were displayed. Every comfort that the house could boast was crowded into it: a glorious fire burned cheerily in the capacious hearth, the chamber

<sup>d</sup> MS. Addit., 5,751, fol. 38. The counterpoints of the Tudor age were of great variety in their adornment. We read of "counter-poyntes of scarlett, furred w<sup>h</sup> fethers."—(*MS. Harl.*, 1,419, fol. 396.) A counterpoint "of fine diaper of Adam and Eve, garnished rounde aboute w<sup>h</sup> a narrowe pasamayne of Venice gold and silver."—(*Ibid.*, fol. 175.)

was sweetened with the fumes of juniper<sup>e</sup>, and the walls were hung with say, or the scarlet serge of Ghent. The printed or painted cotton of Painted Cotton or Waterwork Hangings. Holland was coming into use, but these "waterwork hangings" were deemed so mean and vulgar, that the citizen's wife disdained to hang her standing bedstead in the guests' chamber with such a paltry fabric. Falstaff, when he endeavoured to obtain a loan from his hostess, cunningly applauded them:—

"*Hostess.*—By this heavenly ground I tread on, I must be fain to pawn both my plate, and the tapestry of my dining chambers.

"*Falstaff.*—Glasses, glasses is the only drinking: and for the walls, a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the prodigal, or the German hunting in water-work, is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings, and these fly-bitten tapestries<sup>f</sup>."

These waterwork hangings, however, tended to improve the domestic comfort of a class whose means would not allow of the purchase of a richer fabric.

We also owe to the Dutch an invention of a kindred nature still more valuable. To this age belongs the introduction of stamped paper as a substitute for Introduction of Paper Hangings. hangings, or for painting and panel-work, which were costly modes of ornamentation.

"Paynted papers" are alluded to in the reign of Richard III.<sup>g</sup>, but it is doubtful to what purpose they were applied. In 1568 Herman Schinkel, a Protestant citizen of Delft, who was charged with printing some heretical ballads, protested in his defence, that they were printed in his absence, and that when

<sup>e</sup> Ben Jonson's *Queene of Queensborough*. "A silver pan for spreading perfumes."—(*Gage's Hengrave*, 129, 195.)

<sup>f</sup> Hen. IV., 2nd Pt., act ii. sc. i.

<sup>g</sup> Rot. Parl. 1 Ric. III., c. 12.

he came home he threw them into a corner, "intending to print roses and stripes on the other side to paper attics with<sup>h</sup>." This useful article does not appear to have been much esteemed until considerable progress had been made in its fabrication, and then its general adoption was retarded by its costliness. Fielding says, that printed paper-hangings were in his time scarcely distinguishable from the finest silk, and that there were few houses that had not one or more rooms lined with this furniture<sup>i</sup>: yet Lady Montague found on enquiry that it was as dear as damask<sup>k</sup>.

Among the elegancies observable in the homes of this period are clocks and glass mirrors. It is true we occasionally meet with clocks as articles of household furniture at an earlier date: on the Continent it sometimes adorned my lord's privy chamber as early as the fourteenth century. It is mentioned as an article of chamber furniture in the *Romaunt de la Rose*, written in 1305, and in the "Romance of Sir Degrevant" we are told that there was "an orrlege" in the chamber of Myldore the Bright, to ring the hours of night; but, until the fifteenth century, we do not meet with such articles in English

Old English  
Clocks.

homes. About 1480, Sir John Howard paid several sums for the "emending of the clock" to Wegayn, the clockmaker of Colchester. In the reign of Henry VIII., clocks that struck the hours, and sometimes indeed performed strange tricks by way of disport, were placed as a centre ornament upon the court cupboard in the parlour and banqueting hall. Many of

<sup>h</sup> Notes and Queries, Second Series, ii. p. 7.  
Journal, June 27, 1752.

<sup>i</sup> Covent Garden

<sup>k</sup> Letters. India paper-hangings were advertised in the "Daily Advertiser," July 18, 1751.

the clocks and "rennes" of Henry VIII. had movements, "showinge howe the sea dothe ebbe and flowe;" others when they chimed, made little figures dance; and some taught science, and gave "all the dayes in the yere and the planettes, with movyng dyals enamelled blewe, with the twelve signs gũlte<sup>1</sup>." Clocks, however, were not common, and were but little understood. Lord Shrewsbury, on presenting one to Lord Salisbury in 1611, thought it necessary to accompany it with minute directions as to its management<sup>m</sup>. In the generality of homes, the hour-glass and the sundial were the monitors of passing time; the one stood on the mantel-shelf, and the other was marked on the front of the house or on the parlour window-sill. Ring-dials with pretty "poesies," and a curious instrument called a "calender," in which the sun's hoary progress was so marked, as by a careful comparison to enable the possessor to ascertain the time, were carried in the pocket<sup>n</sup>.

Mirrors of glass were introduced in the sixteenth century. Gascoigne the poet, speaking of  
Mirrors of Glass and Steel. the changes of fashion, laments that—

"The days are past and gone,  
 That Berral glass, with foyles of lovely brown,  
 Might serve to show a seemly favored face.  
 That age is dead and vanisht long ago,  
 Which thoughte that steele, both trusty was, and true."

In the Privy Purse Expences of Henry VIII. in 1532, a payment occurs to a Frenchman "for certayne lokyng glasses," but those in the palaces of the King were

<sup>1</sup> MS. Harl., 1,419, ff. 135—192.

<sup>m</sup> MS. Lans., 92, p. 80.

<sup>n</sup> Lydgate, *Storie of Thebes*; Chaucer, p. 630, edit. 1561; Warton, *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, i. p. 74.

chiefly mirrors of steel or beryl. They were of various fashions, square, oval, and round; in frames of oak and walnut-tree, and curiously ornamented with painted roundels, carvings of satyrs, amorini, or with borders of arabesque ornamentation, combined with many features of Renaissance art. Frames of metal-work, with "antique heads" of copper and gilt, occur; and the mirrors in my lady's chamber were sometimes adorned with borders of needlework and gems. "A faire greate lookinge steele glasse," is described as set with crimson velvet, richly embroidered with "damaske, pirles, with knottes of blewe," and having a curtain of blue taffeta, fringed and tasseled with Venice gold: some were bossed with pearls and set with garnets°. A benitier, or holy-water stoup, was often introduced at the bottom of the frame, from which they who looked into the mirror might sprinkle themselves, The Blessing-cup in old Looking-glasses. to guard against the temptation of vanity. It was an old legend of folk-lore, that those who lingered unblest at the mirror would see the face of the wicked one reflected upon the surface.

With a refinement of taste, displayed as we have seen in every object of household use, we Books in Tudor homes. also observe a corresponding improvement in the recreations and amusements of home. Books were no longer in chains, but were the companions of fair ladies in the old parlour-windows of the manor. The printing-press had diffused with marvellous energy the hoarded treasures of literature: not only ballads and broad-sheets, but folios of romance and learning, were now procurable at a price which a century be-

° MS. Harl., 1,419, p. 136.

fore would scarcely have purchased a skin of vellum. A collection of books that would have rejoiced the heart of Chaucer's poor student, and have been the pride of a monastery in the old days of the Plantagenets, was no unusual addition to the comforts of our English home in the days of the Tudors. John Bruen, a worthy squire of Bruen Stapleford, tells us that abolishing cards and dice from his home, and casting down the gaming-tables and shuffle-boards that had long been part of the furniture in his ancestral hall, he caused two goodly fair Bibles to be placed upon desks, as "continual residentiaries," one in the parlour, and one in the hall<sup>p</sup>. Our home gained much, when it gained the Bible as a household word. Our forefathers knew how to value the gift; many struggled and died for it we know, and the history of their sufferings, enshrined in the Book of Martyrs, became, next to the Bible, the book most loved and treasured in the homes of Protestant England.

After the Tudor age commenced an era of less showy but more general comfort. The rapid growth of English commerce, and the development of our free constitution, tended to gather the means and to create a taste for domestic enjoyments; but a spirit of utilitarianism, strengthened by puritanical enthusiasm, gradually engendered a disregard to architectural beauty, and home became in its exterior, plain, precise, and coldly formal. Inigo Jones, however, set an example of a style both solid and handsome. London still bears many features of the Stuart age, and in some

<sup>The Shuffle-board supplanted by the Bible-lectern.</sup>  
Home in the days of the Stuarts.

<sup>p</sup> Hinde's Life of Bruen, 8vo., 1611.

of the miry and gloomy streets of the poorer districts, in the "back slums" of St. Giles, and the purlieus of Tothill Fields, we meet with buildings that were once the habitations of the wealthy, and the homes of courtly beauties in the merry days of Charles II.

But if the exterior of Stuart homes was less ambitious in style, and the graces of ornament were too readily sacrificed for the useful, the interior could boast of fresh charms and new home attractions. On a summer day the old hall of a Norman looked artistically beautiful in a landscape, and gave an air of romance to the scene; but on a winter night, a Stuart home afforded comforts which the former never possessed. The hall was no longer a characteristic feature in the English mansion. Hospitality suffered, but men grew more independent, and found a wider market for their labour than of old. Serfdom was becoming an institution of the past, and men loved less to ask, and had less occasion to require, the charity of the courtly noble. The common hall fell, therefore, into disuse, and the drawing-rooms and parlours were the apartments in which guests were received and welcomed.

In these apartments wealth found an ample field for display. Manners were more polished, taste more general, and the elegancies of art might adorn, without danger of being jostled by unruly visitors. A growing taste for the beautiful created a respect that insured its preservation. Objects of classic *vertù*, and household treasures which in the days of Henry and Elizabeth would have required a body of yeomen to guard from pilfering guests, were spread in unwatched profusion in Stuart homes.

Increase of  
Domestic  
Luxury.

The domestic furniture of the seventeenth century is celebrated for its decorative beauty. The New fashions in Household Furniture. quaintly-carved chairs and tables, the cabinets and coffers, that had been the glory of the Tudor age, were sent to the garrets and the lumber rooms, to make way for others more modernized. Old-fashioned people still regarded with a sneer the "Gallic gew-gaws," but Gothic beauty was doomed, and quaint Elizabethan chairs, rich with "anticke worke," and covered with velvet embossed with the queen's arms, were regarded in Charles's time as mere lumber, dear at five shillings a-piece<sup>9</sup>. France became famous for the manufacture of furniture, and supplied the wealthy of England with cabinet-work and upholstery. The apartments of Henrietta Maria were furnished The apartments of Henrietta Maria. with Parisian luxury. Couch-chairs, or day-beds, amply cushioned in oriental fashion, were covered with rich cloth of silver, wrought with flowers of gold and silk: the suite, which, in addition to the couch, consisted of two chairs and six or twelve stools, was covered with costly damask. The floors were spread all over with the richest carpets, some of Persian and Turkey fabric, others of Genoa, with elephants and lions embroidered as a centre, surrounded with borders of honeysuckles and roses. One of her chambers was hung with satin, another with a delicate suite of white tapestry wrought with figures, the gift of Sir Harry Vane in happy days. The palace-homes of Charles I. were resplendent with costly tapestries; many were the acquisitions of his royal predecessors, some were coronation and nuptial gifts, but not a few were purchased

<sup>9</sup> MS. Harl., 4,898, fol. 117.

by Charles himself, whom no English monarch has surpassed in a just appreciation of artistic beauty. "I could get my living," said the king, "by any trade I know of, but making of hangings!" But if he could not make them, he had a taste for these decorations of home, and classed them with his pictures as treasures of art. He encouraged its manufacture, and did much by his example to awaken among the nobility a taste for decorative beauty. The tapestries, however, which Charles so much admired, were stript from the walls of the royal apartments by order of the Parliament; yet even in those troubled times they fetched enormous prices. Five pieces of arras, on which the history of David was embroidered, sold for £994 10s. Captain Stowe gave £1,072 for a similar set, hanging in the palace at Greenwich; a suite of the story of Vulcan and Venus brought £1,305; a set containing the five senses, £750; a cloth of estate, enriched with gold and gems, was purchased by Mr. Oliver for £602. The majority of these household treasures were purchased by the nobility, or sold to the London dealers; but Cromwell appears to have selected the most costly fabrics for his own apartments. Five suites of arras, containing in all forty-eight pieces, and principally wrought with Scripture subjects, valued in the aggregate at £23,152, were reserved by the Protector for his own use. A fine set, described as "very riche but popish," was not destroyed, but sold for £880. The plate, some of which was very beautiful, was principally sent to the Mint. The inventory, containing many curious notes

Charles  
Stuart's love  
of Tapestry.

The Fate of  
the Royal  
Hangings.

Household  
Treasures of  
Charles reserved  
for the Pro-  
tector's use.

as to the disposal or appropriation of the royal furniture, from which we gather these particulars, is sufficiently expressive of the domestic luxury of the seventeenth century<sup>r</sup>.

If art was neglected in the busy days of the Commonwealth, domestic splendour came in with the Restoration with renovated charms. The patronage of Louis Quatorze introduced a style of decorative furniture in France, which no age had surpassed for its glittering attractions; the lofty saloons of Versailles shone in one

Introduction of the Louis Quatorze style into England. gorgeous display of golden ornamentation, which, aiming to gratify the prevailing taste for brilliant contrast and effect, still retained some faint traces of classical art. This new and luxurious style found a ready reception in our English home, and the apartments of Catherine of Braganza were furnished with Parisian fashion and Oriental splendour. Her bed was of crimson velvet richly embroidered with silver, and was presented, at a cost of £7,000, by the States of Holland<sup>s</sup>. The toilet-table and great looking-glass of beaten and massive gold was the gift of the queen-mother. The marvels in marqueterie and parqueterie; in niella<sup>t</sup>, and pietra commessa<sup>u</sup>, were

<sup>r</sup> MS. Harl., 4,898, ff. 44, 78, 143. On the death of Cromwell a general pillage appears to have been made from Whitehall. A warehouse near the Three Cranes, in Thames-street, was found to be crammed with furniture, which had been stored there for the use of Eliza Cromwell, the Protector's wife. Seventeen cart-loads of "riche house stuff" was taken from thence and brought back to Whitehall."—(*MS. Additional*, 10,116, fol. 140.)

<sup>s</sup> MS. Additional, 10,116, fol. 145.

<sup>t</sup> Objects encrusted with enamels, gems, &c.

<sup>u</sup> Marble inlaid with various coloured stones, and representing flowers, &c.

unrivalled in the chambers of the Pompadours or Du Barrys. The carpets, the pictures, and the tapestries, were equally costly; and never before had there been seen in England such cabinets and china vases as those which the queen had brought from Portugal to adorn her apartments in Hampton Court. At a subsequent period these sumptuous chambers were deflowered to pamper to the prodigal vanity of Louise de Querouaille. The apartments of that licentious beauty, says Evelyn, were twice or thrice pulled down and rebuilt to satisfy her extravagant whims; and the same curious observer describes the magnificence of her furniture. The tapestry was of the newest Parisian fabric, fresh from the Hôtel Royal des Gobelins, and the designs were incomparable imitations of the finest paintings. The palaces of Versailles and St. Germain's were depicted with architectural exactness, and field sports, landscapes, figures, and exotic birds, were wrought with such tenderness, that the canvas appeared animated with the glow of life. Tables and stands of the choicest workmanship were loaded with great vases, pendule clocks, and ornamental plate. The candelabra, the hanging sconces, and even the brasier, or coal-pan on the chimney hearth, were all of massive silver. Some of the rarest paintings from her majesty's chamber hung upon the walls, and Japanese cabinets, Chinese screens, and a profusion of oriental luxuries, the same perhaps which the queen had brought from Portugal, adorned that boudoir of the Duchess of Portsmouth, in which, with a wrapper thrown loosely around her person, she would sit in all the splendour of her guilty sway; and whilst

Magnificent  
Furniture in  
the apartments  
of Louise de  
Querouaille.

her maids combed her tresses, and fulfilled the duties of the toilet, she would entertain her royal paramour and the highest nobles of the land with sallies of indelicate but vivacious wit, with smart repartee, and the blandishments of a courtesan. But riches and splendour thus purchased with dishonour create no envy; and who, looking upon such scenes, and recalling the immorality and vice with which they are associated, will fail to turn, as Evelyn did, with feelings of greater contentment to his own less showy but happier home?

The example set by the Court of Charles II. was readily copied by the nobility, and there grew up among the middle class in town a general desire to ape the manners of the rich. The shops in Cheapside and the Strand were crammed with common substitutes and imitations, with sham jewellery and tinselled furniture; and that honest consistency between appearance and means, which had won honour and respect for the citizen in the homely days of Elizabeth, was rapidly disappearing before an excess of domestic luxury, which had become almost universal, even, says Evelyn, to wantonness and profusion.

It must be owned that, with regard to the appliances of home, many new conveniences were introduced. It was the aim of a clever joiner to invent novelties and strange combinations in furniture, and by springs and secret mechanism to create wonder and admiration. Chairs were made so as to be convertible into a bedstead, a table, or a couch\*. Cabinets possessed secret recesses which would have puzzled a magician to discover. Lorient invented, for the salons of Choisy, tables

\* Evelyn Memoirs, i. 122.

called waiters, which, on touching a spring, sank through the floor, to reappear laden for a repast.

But the commonplace introductions of the period were more valuable; perhaps the chest of drawers was the most useful. Pepys records the purchase of one for his bed-chamber<sup>y</sup>. They often appeared in the homes of his age, with washing tables, table looking-glasses, and many other now common conveniences of the bedroom. Clocks were more general articles of furniture. Dials were still used for the exterior, and Sun-dials. often placed on a smoothly mown lawn in front of the mansion. Charles I. expended large sums in erecting stone dials about the grounds of Hampton Court<sup>z</sup>. It was usual to inscribe them with mottoes, so that, as an old author says, they who came to enquire about time, went away thinking of eternity. It is Love of Proverbial Wisdom. singular to what an extent our forefathers carried this love of proverbial wisdom. The doors, the walls, the chimney mantels, the tapestry, the tables, cupboards, and the chairs; the cups, lavers, and indeed every article of domestic use that could bear a motto, taught scraps and precious lines of truth to the uninitiated.

The use of glass and china was now no longer confined to the wealthy; nor for the former were we altogether dependent upon the Venetians. Foreign mechanics had met with generous encouragement in England, and at the Italian glass-house at Greenwich were blown glasses of even finer metal than those of Murano<sup>a</sup>. The ships from the East Indies brought the rich porcelain of China as a lucrative article of

<sup>y</sup> July 1st, 1661.

<sup>z</sup> MS. Regis 17, a. v.

<sup>a</sup> Evelyn Memoirs, i. 462.

commerce, and a taste, which fashion stimulated into a mania, was created for these Oriental elegancies. China-shops and auction-rooms were thronged with wealthy competitors for the recent novelties; and the boudoirs of fashion and beauty were crowded to inconvenience with china vases and lacquer ware. The dressing-room of the Countess of Arlington at Goring House was thus adorned with Oriental vases and cabinets. Lord Wotton's house at Hampstead was noted for its rare porcelain, its Indian cabinets, and noble furniture; and the mansion of Mr. Bohun at Lea is described by a contemporary as "a cabinet of elegancies," from the splendour of the Oriental screens and china with which it was adorned. But Lady Gerrard displayed the finest collection in England. At a supper given by her ladyship in 1652, all the cups and dishes, and even the platters, which were innumerable, were of the richest porcelain, and excited the envy and admiration of the guests<sup>b</sup>.

But although the higher classes were indulging in these Eastern luxuries, the ruder materials of the preceding age were not altogether abolished. It is said that the French priests compelled Henrietta Maria to eat off treen or wooden dishes as a penance; and Pepys, being at a Lord Mayor's dinner, complains that there were no napkins, nor change of trenchers, and that he had to drink out of earthen pitchers and eat off wooden dishes. But increase of luxury did not improve domestic manners. My lady would quaff canary and buttered ale, or drink claret and eat botargo, until she forgot all those

Effect of  
Court example  
on Domestic  
Habits.

<sup>b</sup> Evelyn Mem. i. 263, 461, 485, and 545.

instinctive habits of refinement which gallantry even then persisted in ascribing to her sex. To drink was not only fashionable, but regarded as an indication of high breeding, and a lady of fashion in the days of Charles the Gay deemed it no disgrace, and felt no blush of shame, as her maid led her more than half-muddled to her chamber. As every courtier was a wine-bibber, and inebriety was esteemed honourable and gentlemanly, means were employed to stimulate the desire for drink. Anchovies were brought up and handed round with the wine; and Pepys, who frequently alludes to the custom, was often compelled, after regaling on anchovies and wine, to call up the maids in the night to bring him more liquor. With wine and dissipation, cards and the gaming-tables came again into fashion. Friends met, not so much for social intercourse, as to win or lose their money. Amity was extinguished in the cunning and jealousy of play, and an invitation to a fashionable party would often necessitate a visit to the pawnbroker, who, upon my lady's diamonds, or her silver chamber, would advance at an enormous interest the funds necessary for play.

The home of the country gentleman was the least affected by these changes of manners. He still lived surrounded by the rude comforts of his ancestors, and his household was seldom altered to suit the prevailing fashions. He looked with contempt upon the luxury of the towns, and had no desire to improve his domestic economy by the recent inventions of science, or the alluring introductions of commerce. The ancient furniture of his hall and chambers

Home of the  
Country  
Squire.

was retained until it mouldered with age. He was the last to observe old English customs, and the most tardy in adopting the vices of the age. His spacious kitchen, scrupulously clean, served as a common hall, and presented unmistakeable signs of hospitality. An array of bacon flitches and prodigious hams filled the rack, and decorated the huge beams that girthed the ceiling. His table, rude and devoid of ornament, but polished with oaten meal until it glistened like ivory, was not unworthy to bear the goodly cheer with which it was daily loaded, and to which every guest, and every casual visitor, was alike heartily invited to partake. His hearth, piled high with goodly logs, shed a glow of comfort over the room, and shone brightly on the new garnish of London pewter that adorned the dresser. His chimney corner was the seat he loved in his convivial and social hours, and on the stone benches that flanked the fire he would gather around him the whole of his household. The happiest reminiscences of the childhood of our great-great-grandfathers were associated with those old firesides; it was there that they recited the marvels of ancient story, read the last chap-book purchased from the strolling pedlar, or listened with rapt attention to the aged grandame, as with homely truth she explained the scenes from sacred history depicted upon the Dutch tiles that lined the chimney corner.

Among the changes that occurred in domestic manners at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the increase in the number of meals, and the establishment of breakfast as a stated meal. Previously it had been only

Change in  
Meal-tides and  
the Introduc-  
tion of Break-  
fast.

occasionally observed in the establishments of the great. Queen Elizabeth breakfasted off meat, bread and cheese, and ale; her morning table was sometimes spread sumptuously, but the usual custom among both rich and poor was merely to take a morning draught. "My diet," says Cotton, "is always one glass as soon as I am dressed, and no more till dinner." At Harper's or at the Crown, Pepys drank his morning draught, which was usually a glass of buttered ale. He would occasionally indulge in more substantial fare, and he thought it worth while to record how one morning he breakfasted off bread and butter, sweetmeats and strong drinks<sup>c</sup>. The sons of Charles I. had a regular allowance for their breakfast table. The Prince of Wales had two manchet loaves, two fine chete, and four of second quality, from the royal pantry, with beef, mutton, and a chicken, which he washed down with ale and a pint of Gascoigne wine. James, Duke of York, received from the pantry the two manchet loaves, and a fine chete loaf, which if not so bountiful in quantity, was surely enough for any prince, except perhaps a Don Carlos of Spain; but the beef was struck off the allowance, and in the absence of the Gascoigne wine he took his morning draught of beer or ale<sup>d</sup>.

An event occurred about this time, which, unimportant as it then appeared, was to affect in a remarkable degree the manners and usages of domestic life. A Greek named Canopios visited Oxford in 1637, and in preference to the Ipocrase and ale of the college buttery, quaffed a dark decoc-

*Introduction  
of Coffee.*

<sup>c</sup> Feb. 3, 1660; Mar. 8, 1662.

<sup>d</sup> MS. Harl., 7,623, fol. 2.

tion strange to the Oxonians. Evelyn, perhaps, saw him drink the first cup of coffee ever drank in England. Twenty years later coffee became an important article of commerce, yielding a handsome revenue to the crown<sup>e</sup>. A duty of fourpence a gallon was levied upon the beverage, which was sold ready-made at the corners of the streets. Coffee-houses became numerous, and soon rivalled in customers the ale-houses of the city. The shops of those who were noted for the strength and flavour of their coffee became so thronged as to prove an annoyance to the neighbourhood. James Furr, who kept the "Rainbow" in Lower Temple Gate, was prosecuted in 1657 for creating a nuisance by making and vending a liquor called coffee.

Tea was also introduced into England about the middle of the seventeenth century. D'Israeli  
Introduction of Tea.
speaks of a collector who had Oliver Cromwell's teapot in his possession. That it was known in the time of the Protector is pretty evident, but it was only used as regalia at high entertainments. Tea was sold at from six to ten guineas the pound. Thomas Garway, the founder of Garraway's Coffee House, first offered it at a more reasonable price, and in 1657 he advertised tea at fifty shillings a pound. The owner of the Sultaness-Head Cophee House in Sweeting's Rents, also advertised the new China drink, "called by the Chinians Tchæ, and by other nations Tay, alias Tee," in the newspapers of 1658<sup>f</sup>. "There was," says

<sup>e</sup> The net receipts for the duty on tea and coffee for the year 1694 were £3,827 13s. 5d.—(*MS. Harl.*, 7,406, fol. 1.)

<sup>f</sup> *Mercurius Politicus*, Sep. 30, 1658.

a writer in 1659, "about this time, a Turkish drink to be sold in almost every street called coffee, and another drink called tea<sup>g</sup>." "I did send," says Pepys in 1661, "for a cup of tea, a China drink, of which I never had drunk before." It was gradually creeping into favour, and the social charms of the tea-table were esteemed and recognised in our English home. Catherine of Braganza, who had drunk of it in Portugal, encouraged its introduction, and in 1678 Boutekoe, a Dutch physician, so earnestly commended it, that its use became fashionable among the higher classes<sup>h</sup>, in spite of the ridicule with which it was abused. The wits declared it a drink fit only for women, or men that lived like women<sup>i</sup>; and Colley Cibber sneers at it as an innocent pretence for bringing the wicked of both sex together of a morning<sup>k</sup>. Breakfast, thanks to these temperate introductions, became a domestic meal, and the gallants had no longer an excuse to seek the "Fountain" or the "Rainbow" for their morning draught.

The costliness of tea retarded its introduction into the homes of the middle class, and in Ireland and Scotland its virtues were scarcely known. There is a well-known tradition, that the widow of the Duke of Monmouth sent a pound of tea as a present to some friends in Scotland, who, being ignorant of the mode of its preparation, boiled the leaves, threw the liquor away, and served it up as a vegetable. Tea was generally purchased ready-made from the neighbouring

<sup>g</sup> MS. Addit. in Brit. Mus., 10,116.  
of Health, p. 77.

<sup>h</sup> Sinclair's Code

<sup>i</sup> Shadwell's Stock Jobbers.

<sup>k</sup> Dedication to Lady's Delight, p. 23.

“Cophee-house.” A keg of cold tea was considered an appropriate present to a lady, and the dish of tea with which Philander regaled his learned friends had probably less of the flavour and few of those exhilarating qualities of tea freshly brewed from the hissing urn. Mary of Orange passionately loved the tea-table, and appreciated its social charms. Her tea-caddy was filled with the choicest mixtures that her merchant, Solyman de Medina, could procure<sup>1</sup>. The tea-services in use at this time were of Oriental china, and the cups without handles were in size proportioned to the little round tea-pot; when not in use they formed the choicest ornament in the quaint corner-

The Tea-urn. cupboard of the parlour. The tea-urn was first introduced at the table of Queen Mary, and was made of massive silver by Peter Harache, her goldsmith<sup>m</sup>.

A few years, and this expensive luxury became a common comfort, and proved to our grandfathers the most pleasant and social meal in their daily life. What a charming scene does Goldsmith paint of the Vicar of Wakefield, sitting under the hawthorn hedge, drinking tea with his family, and Olivia presiding at the urn! It had then become, he says, an occasional banquet, and as they had it but seldom, it diffused a new joy,

<sup>1</sup> In 1694 her Majesty purchased half-a-pound of rare tea, called “Keyser’s Thea in two pots.” The royal tea-table was supplied in large quantities; in the same year 31½lbs. were bought at a cost of £107 10s. 6d.; also 14lbs. at 66s. per lb.; and in 1695 £101 5s. was paid for 36lbs. (*MS. Additional*, 5,751, ff. 144, 145, 194.)

<sup>m</sup> In 1694 a tea-kettle, chafing-dish and butt, with handles all of silver gilt, were made for her Majesty, an old one being allowed for in part payment.—(*MS. Additional*, 5,751, fol. 140.)

the preparation of it being made with no small share of bustle and ceremony. We all know how dearly Dr. Johnson loved the tea-table, and we picture him at Mrs. Thrale's drinking his sixteen cups, and defending its liberal use with his powerful eloquence.

The homes of the eighteenth century were not without their distinctive features. We may glean charming pictures of them, drawn with all the minuteness of the Flemish school, from the familiar writings of Goldsmith and Fielding; domestic scenes still retaining the lingerings of ancient usages and homely manners. Yet many customs were then abolished with the progress of refinement, and many a rude contrivance, which had served generations of English yeomen, was discarded or improved. Fashion created many changes, and commerce still more. The middle classes reaped the full benefit of these sources of progression, and their homes smiled with new accessions of comfort. We were no longer dependent upon Persia for our carpets, nor upon Venice for our glass, nor upon Paris or Flanders for our household furniture. Kidderminster supplied cheaper carpets, Staffordshire a ware that rivalled the delft of Holland, and glass that surpassed the best metal of Venice or Bohemia. Sheffield manufactured table cutlery in abundance, and the looms of Manchester spun linen fabrics for the homestead and the cottage. Our mechanics constructed furniture which no foreign workmen could rival for substantiality of make, although in design they lacked the taste and artistic decoration of former days, and followed too closely the quaint stiff fashions of the Dutch. The mahogany of Jamaica,

*Introduction  
of Mahogany  
Furniture.*

which was introduced in the reign of Queen Anne, superseded walnut-tree and oak. A hundred and fifty years ago this wood was almost unknown to English commerce. In 1724, the Prince of Wales, afterwards George II., ordered the staircases of Marble-hall, Twickenham, to be constructed of mahogany, which was perhaps its first application to home embellishment. In the same year a West Indian captain sent a few planks to Dr. Gibbon, a physician, who was erecting a house in King-street, Covent Garden. The wood being too hard for the carpenter's tools, it was laid aside as lumber; but when the house was finished, a cabinet-maker was engaged to make some necessary furniture, and seeking among the stuff in the yard for wood suitable for the purpose, he found the foreign planks: his tools being somewhat sharper than those of the carpenter, he met with more success, and the first article made from the mahogany of Jamaica was a candle-box for the doctor's kitchen. This was so much admired, that Woolaston, the cabinet-maker, was instructed to make a bureau for the drawing-room. The bureau became famous, and people of taste came purposely to see it. Woolaston made a fortune, as it became the fashion to sit on chairs and to dine off tables of mahogany.

Looking retrospectively upon our history and its Conclusion. various eras of invention and progress, we see that our English home, such as we now enjoy, is the valued result of years of conquest, in the realms of commerce and science. Slow indeed was its progress in ancient times; patiently, and by tardy and often apparently insignificant acquirements, has home

emerged from the mere cold dull refuge from the storm and tempest, to become the dwelling of comfort and refinement. It is curious, indeed, to observe how, at each advancing step, fresh wants were created, which in their turn encouraged and accelerated the efforts of science and art, as applied to the conveniences and embellishments of home. Art, indeed, in her highest walks, may look back to the early ages of our English home as the nursery of her genius, and may gather the gratifying assurance that in her efforts to make the useful beautiful to the mind of our forefathers, she infused tastes that materially aided the good work of our civilization. It is only necessary to look back to an early epoch and compare it with our own, to realize the full measure of the peaceful trophies of our domestic history. We learn that those innumerable comforts which we pass unobserved, because we have always been familiar with their enjoyment, were in the old times luxuries, of which we can find no trace, save in the household records of the great; and it is by no means exceeding the bounds of truth, when we say that the homes of English artizans of the nineteenth century are surrounded with more conveniences, and possess within themselves more of the accessories to comfort, than were enjoyed by the majority of the nobility in the vaunted days of chivalry.

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